



Newsletter

15th May 2020

Dear parents/carers,

I hope you are all keeping well and managing to keep healthy and safe.

I am writing to share with you our plans for your children's education for the remainder of the summer term. There has been a lot of confusing information recently in the media which may have caused confusion or raised some questions. I hope this letter will provide some clarity and reassurance.

Online and home learning

Education online, at home, will continue until the summer holiday. All our staff are working incredibly hard to provide high-quality online learning activities, blogs, video clips and support and will continue to do this. We will also continue our weekly book swaps. Everything you are doing to help your children access this learning makes a huge difference. Keep up the great work! Our aim is to see every child taking part in learning every 'school day'!

School open for Key worker children

We will continue to run a skeleton school for any child who needs it. Please email admin@virginia.towerhamlets.sch.uk if you think you are a key worker and you would like a place at school.

Food vouchers

We will continue to have food vouchers for those families that are currently receiving them for the rest of the summer term. Please remember you will not receive them during half term.

The Prime Minister's announcement in relation to schools

The government would very much like it if schools could open to increasing numbers of children from 1st June 2020. However, the government has not confirmed that this will happen yet, because the decision to do so will be made if the five key tests set by the government justify the changes at the time.

The five key tests stated in Sunday's announcement are:

We must protect our NHS.

We must see sustained falls in the death rate.

We must see sustained and considerable falls in the rate of infection.

We must sort out our challenges in getting enough PPE to the people who need it, and yes, it is a global problem but we must fix it.

And last, we must make sure that any measures we take do not force the reproduction rate of the disease - the R - back up over one, so that we have the kind of exponential growth we were facing a few weeks ago.

Government's intent

Essentially, what we have learned since the Prime Minister's announcement is that if schools open to more children, it will be on a phased basis, prioritising the children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 first. The government indicated that they would like to see all primary school year groups back in school for at least a month before the end of the school year. They have however made it clear that



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families who choose not to send their children back in to school, with the exception of families deemed to be vulnerable, will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels.

What does this mean for Virginia Primary School.

The only thing we know with certainty is that there will be no big changes between now and the 1st of June. Between now and then, in addition to the government's monitoring of the five key tests, the following will need to happen in order for a final decision for Virginia Primary School to be reached:

The government will continue to engage in talks with each of the teaching and support staff unions regarding the conditions for children and staff's safe return to the workplace. For the moment, the unions are seeking scientific evidence to reassure their members that it is safe for them to return. Unions will need to be supportive of the children's return to school if we are to be able to staff our school safely.

Our senior leadership team will undertake a detailed risk assessment, informed by the extensive guidance issued by the Department of Education and Public Health England, in partnership with other local Schools and the Local Authority.

The outcome of this risk assessment will need to be discussed with governors and have their approval.

We will carefully consider how we can put the guidance issued into practice and what systems we need to reduce the risk for our children, staff and families. We will also contact you to find out whether you would intend to send your child to school if we were to open for specific year groups. This information will help us to plan carefully and in the best interests of children and families and members of our staff team.

Please rest assured that we will not start to re-open to more children until we are sure that we have the right systems in place and we can do it in a way that minimises any risk for your children and our staff.

Stay safe healthy and kind

Best wishes,

Barbara Lo Giudice, acting head teacher