**PLEASE make sure you read and understand this letter. If you need a translation or a verbal explanation please get in touch soon.**

8th June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We hope you and your family are safe and well and coping in these unusual circumstances. I  wanted to take this opportunity to ‘thank you’ all for the amazing job you are doing juggling your family needs, supporting your extended family and friends and becoming your child’s teacher and therapist. We know this is not an easy job and we hope you are finding our support helpful and encouraging.

As you are aware we have continued to provide a service to those in need and we are opening to more pupils this week, but we must be clear and upfront and state that we cannot guarantee that your child will be safe from the Covid 19 virus in school. However, we will do all in our power to try to minimise the risks to your child and our staff.

The key issue we have as a specialist provision is that we cannot socially distance from your child or the other children in school. What we have done is to follow the advice from the Department of Education and create small ‘bubbles’ with no more than 6 children supported by the same consistent group of staff in the school building.  The children will remain in these small groups throughout the school day but will still enjoy a great deal of outdoor education and opportunities to learn in our Sports Hall and Rebound Therapy Centre. Again, following advice, we will not be using the Hydro Pool, Soft Play, Library or our Thrive Room for the time being. Children will play in their own discreet play areas across school with children of similar ages.

These groups will be led initially by our Senior Teaching & Learning Assistants with support from the Leadership Team as the Class Teachers are continuing to work from home to provide a remote service to all of our pupils for the foreseeable future. They will still be available to answer any questions, set more homework, phone you weekly to see how we can help, signpost resources and ideas to keep your children entertained and will be providing more remote group learning opportunities.

In terms of risk I think it is important to draw your attention to the latest information from the Independent Sage Report May 28th which clearly states that they do not think it is safe for schools to open now. They suggest that waiting until the 15th June halves the risk to children, as does remaining at home and that a return in September brings the risk levels down towards zero.

However, the risks to children remain relatively low and we must be guided by the level of contagion in our local areas. We understand that Public Health England will alert us to any spikes in our locality and if this happens we will obviously then close to all pupils and staff.

Having said that, the risks to children with complex health care needs is uncertain and the evidence is still very unclear. We do know that youngsters with learning disabilities in residential settings have been very susceptible to Covid 19 and the percentage rate of deaths has been well over 130% which is very worrying. The problem is exacerbated by some children who should have a shielding letter not receiving one and others who have one then having this questioned by Health colleagues. You as parents understand the health care needs of your children better than anyone. This virus is very damaging to anyone prone to respiratory issues, anyone prone to chest infections, anyone who might aspirate, have diabetes, is overweight, etc. One of the problems we are encountering is the mixed messages some of you are receiving from your Health contacts. If you are in this position please contact school and we will talk it through.

As a school we have carried out all the necessary risk assessments and have drafted our own Covid 19 Policy to keep your child and our staff as safe as possible. I cannot state clearly enough we cannot guarantee that your child will not catch the virus from other children or members of our staff. I am deeply grateful to our staff who are agreeing to work with your children despite the fact that we cannot socially distance from your child. They are putting their own health at risk and whilst we will be using PPE for personal hygiene and intimate care they will not be using it during the normal school day to keep things as normal as possible for your children.

There is a very real risk of a second wave of the pandemic and we will keep our plans under constant review in partnership with our Local Authority and Public Health England.

The Leadership Team will be in school every day from now on so if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to phone or email. The Admin Team will also be available daily if you have any questions about transport, school meals, free school meal vouchers, medication, etc.

The Nursing Team will be in school each lunchtime to administer medications but will not be on site all day. We will therefore call 999 if we have any medical emergencies on site.

We anticipate the Physios, SALT and OT will also be providing a service in school from the 8th June. Unfortunately we cannot answer questions on their behalf.

Yours sincerely

Chris Rollings
Head Teacher