



The Southwater Infant Academy

“Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together”

11 July 2020

Dear Families,

Following the announcement made yesterday from the government, it seemed like a good time to write to you all. I am sure that the news about scrapping the plans for schools to open to all year groups before the end of the summer term will have created mixed feelings among our families. For some of you, there will have been relief that you were not forced to make a choice about whether to return your child to the academy. For others, there will have been anger that your children seem to have been left out, or forgotten, right now. And for others there will be concern and anxiety about how you will manage as a family - juggling work expectations, home schooling and children missing their friends. I can completely understand all of these feelings, and on behalf of the staff team we all share the frustrations that are felt about the year groups we are not able to return to the academy at this point. For our Year 2 children, this is an important term for preparing to move on to a new school, and for our Year 1 children we would have been preparing them to meet new teachers and start visiting the Year 2 classrooms. We would like nothing more than to be able to welcome back all of our children, but we also recognise the important role we play in the community through keeping the infection rate of Covid-19 down with the actions that we take.

When we were asked to prepare for a wider reopening to children before half term, Reception and Year 1 were the two year groups the government asked us to look at possibly bringing back. We recognised early on that it would be unlikely that we would be able to accommodate both Reception and Year 1 without compromising safety, due to the size of the academy and the numbers of children involved. As such we followed the government guidance for schools on how to prioritise children, which stated clearly that Reception children should be brought back first. This will not be the same across all schools. Every school is different, and will have different issues that they will have faced over widening their numbers of children. For some schools in the Horsham area, opening up to any year groups has not been possible due to the large numbers of key worker children already attending. Other schools have not been able to ask their Year 6 children to return, while some schools have been able to bring back all the year groups as space and staff have been sufficient. We did not make a choice not to bring back Year 1 children, we were simply unable to I am afraid.

We also recognise how unfair this all seems to our Year 2 children, who will have been looking forward to finishing their year at the infants and starting their transition work to prepare for their next schools. To have not even been mentioned in the year groups suggested by the government does seem like a real omission. Additionally, we would normally be preparing transition into the academy for our new Reception children this half term. We would be visiting children at their Pre-Schools and Nurseries, and welcoming families in to show them round the academy and join us for story sessions.

What we do want all our families to know is that we have not forgotten you. The staff team are working hard to teach in school for the children attending, and maintain the online learning for the children who are not able to be here. We are also preparing transition activities for those children due to leave us, and the new children due to join us in September. We will continue to monitor the guidance that we receive from the government and liaise with colleagues across West Sussex, and are hopeful that we may get

further information before the end of this academic year about what the intentions are for schools moving forwards. Whenever a return to school comes for all our children, we will ensure that we are ready. We have already put in place systems to support our families on their return, and will continue to strive to meet the needs of every child at the academy, whatever they might be.

I would like to thank you all for the huge amount of support shown to the academy over the past 11 weeks. It has been wonderful to receive emails, tweets, updates and photos on Tapestry to let us know how you are doing. We are still here and happy to support you in any way that we can. Please do get in touch if you need to, either by phone or email, and we will do all we can to help.

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