



# Bure Valley School

Part of the Aylsham Learning Federation

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Dear parent/carers,

I hope that you have had as restful a break and as good a Christmas as possible given the circumstances we all find ourselves in.

I'm sorry for contacting you so late in the holiday, we had hoped to be in a position to update you earlier, but like you, we have been waiting for clarity from the Department for Education (DfE) and the government.

In his statement to the House of Commons on the 30 December 2020, the Secretary of State for education Gavin Williamson stated that all primary schools, apart from a small number in infection hot spots, should open for all pupils on Monday the 4 January 2021 as planned. He also announced that secondary school aged pupils will return to school in a staggered approach to allow high schools time to prepare for mass lateral flow testing of pupils and staff.

**From this Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2020, BVS will continue to operate as normal, so all children should attend school unless they are required to self-isolate.**

## Rationale for Going Back to School

The DfE believe that children being out of education causes significant harm to learning, pupils' life chances and mental and physical health. They state that children continue to be at low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and that the risk from the virus of severe disease and death to children is very low. Therefore, they continue to argue that the balance of risk is overwhelmingly in favour of children remaining in education.

The government has made it a national priority that education and childcare settings should continue to operate as normal as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak. This remains the default position for all areas irrespective of local restriction tiers. We have been told that any restrictions on education would only be as a last resort and may only be initiated following a ministerial decision; designed as a containment measure for the 'rare circumstances' they are required to address transmission within education settings and the community.

Yesterday we were told that some primary schools in some areas of London, East Sussex, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent will move to online learning except for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils because of rates of infection in these areas. Should Norfolk or Broadland be put into this category, we would inform you immediately and there would be a temporary movement to online learning while an attempt was made to reduce infection rates.

Executive Headteacher: Mr D Spalding B.A. (Hons) M.Ed. (Cantab)

Head of School: Mr J Olney B.A. (Hons)

Deputy Headteachers: Mrs H Howard B.A. (Hons), Mrs H Pope B.A. (Hons)

Director of Business and Community Strategy: Mrs J Tuttle Finance Director: Mrs T Colman



## **Request for information**

We have been told numerous times to consider how we would operate in the event that such restrictions become necessary in our area, including how we would ensure that every child receives the quantity and quality of education and care to which they are normally entitled, whether onsite or remotely. We are prepared for this if and when it happens.

We will be surveying you next week to see who would qualify as a key worker and who would want/expect to send their child to school in the event of teaching moving online.

Regardless of any future restrictions, onsite schooling would continue for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils as was the case previously.

## **A focus on safety measures**

To reduce the likelihood of transmission in our settings and wider community we will continue to strictly adhere to our safety measures and will do our utmost to ensure that our systems are followed closely.

We will continue to follow the guidance we receive to the letter and will adapt our systems of controls based on the most up-to-date risk assessments and regulations. It is in our interest to create as safe an environment as possible for the adults who work at our school, so please be assured that we take this responsibility very seriously.

## **We need your help as well to reduce the risks of transmission in our setting and wider community.**

To do this please refresh your understanding of our current risk assessment and parent guidance:

### Risk Assessment

<http://www.burevalleyschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Bure-Valley-COVID19-Educational-Settings-Risk-Assessment-Recovery-Plan-October-2020.pdf>

### Parental Guidance

<http://www.burevalleyschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BVS-Return-to-school-Parental-Guidance-1.pdf>

## **Summary of actions parents/carers should take**

- Wear a face covering/mask when visiting school;
- Limit the number of adults dropping off or collecting a child to one;
- Arrive on time;
- Wait patiently for your child's year group drop off and collection times;
- Maintain good social distancing from one another;
- Arrive and leave the school site promptly so that we can get pupils in and out of school as efficiently as possible;
- Do not send your child to school if you or they have symptoms;
- Collect your child promptly if they develop symptoms whilst at school or have been told leave school due to a positive case in our setting;
- Get tested as soon as possible if you or a family member are showing symptoms;
- Isolate if you have been told to;
- Follow Tier 4 restrictions.

## **School meals**

We will continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school and meals will continue to be made available, free of charge, to all pupils who meet the free school meals eligibility criteria. For those in receipt of free school meals, vouchers will be given to pupils who are not attending school where they are: self-isolating, have had symptoms or a positive test results themselves, been a close contact of someone who has coronavirus or are not attending as a result of local restrictions advised by the government.

## **Looking ahead**

When compared to other settings (within our county and across the country), we were fortunate last term to have minimal disruption at school. It is however, in the coming months, becoming more likely that we will be affected by a positive case within our setting due to the increased prevalence of the virus and the transmissibility of the new variant. Parents and carers are going to have to be understanding and will need to work with us in a calm and sensible manner if there is any disruption to schooling at Bure Valley due to Covid-19.

I will endeavour to keep you updated across the spring term, and myself and colleagues will be available next week to answer any questions you may have.

Please be patient with myself and our staff this term. We often have to respond to ministerial decisions at very short notice given the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic. In all instances we endeavour to make the very best of challenging situations for both our pupils and our colleagues.

We look forward to seeing you all next week, and on behalf of the team I wish you and your families a happy and healthy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Olney

Head of School