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Dear Parents and Carers

We wanted to let you know what we are doing as school Governors to re-open our school, in line with Government guidance and should we get the go ahead to do so.

In times like this, we will all be wishing to keep our families safe and well, and to look after our emotional wellbeing. We know that parents and carers will wish to make their own decisions on what is best for them and their children.

This letter sets out what we are doing, and planning to do, so that you can make informed choices.

### **What has the Government said**

The Government has now said that vulnerable children and children of key workers should take up the school provision which has been offered by Heathwood during lock-down. To accommodate greater numbers, this provision will be relocated to Heathwood Lower School on 1 June. It will continue to be available five days a week.

The Government is also looking to potentially re-open for Nursery, Reception, Year 1, and Year 6 children. The intention for Year 6 is to aid transition for those children moving from primary to secondary schools. Unfortunately, this does not align with Central Bedfordshire's three-tier school system.

As a school, we would like to prioritise Year 4 children to aid their transition to Middle School. Unfortunately, this has not been agreed by the Government, and we do not physically have the size of school which would allow us to do this ourselves. This is deeply disappointing, but we are looking to see what we can do to help our Year 4 children. Mr Dicker and Mrs Wright are also working with the Middle Schools to understand how they will make starting school in September as easy and as supportive as possible for the new Year 5 children.

### Government guidance

The Government has acknowledged that younger children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. They have therefore published [guidance for schools](#), which sets out:

- A maximum of 15 children per classroom
- Children and adults to be assigned into set groups with dedicated resources. There should not be any mixing of groups
- There needs to be much more regular cleaning, of hands and facilities. Everything needs to be cleaned ahead of being used by a new group
- Things which are difficult to clean need to be removed. This includes all soft furnishings, such as soft toys, cushions, rugs and blankets
- There need to be signs and plans to help people move around the school whilst maintaining social distancing as much as possible. This is likely to include staggering when people arrive at the school, move around the school, and leave the school.



- Only one adult is to drop off and pick up their child
- If someone becomes ill with the coronavirus, everyone in the group to be informed and asked to self-isolate for 14 days (or unless they have a negative coronavirus test result)
- Schools are to carry out a detailed risk assessment
- Separate guidance for workplaces also says that any of our school workers who are 'clinically vulnerable' need to be offered roles which keep them isolated from others.

**We understand that this means the experience for our children will be very different than before, and not what they are used to.**

### **Leighton and Linslade Cluster**

The cluster of schools has agreed the following shared principles with schools:

If safe to do so, from the 1<sup>st</sup> June:

- We will prioritise providing places for children in line with the government expectations, in this order:
  - Children of Key Workers and those considered Vulnerable or have an EHCP Plan(in line with CBC expectations),
  - Nursery (age 3 & 4), Reception, Year 1, Year 6 (primary only),
  - We, in principle, would then prioritise time for Year 4 in school to support with transition to Middle School,
- At this stage the return of year 2 and 3 pupils is considered unlikely, but each school will review and keep you updated this as we evaluate the effectiveness of the return process,
- Please understand that each school will determine the safest way of accommodating pupils, and may need to consider limiting the length of the school day or limiting their provision to certain year groups, depending on; the limitations of the school site, the social distancing requirements from the government, and the number of staff available.
- This may mean your child may have a different offer than others their age in the Learning Community, but schools will be doing everything they can to work in the best interests of their pupils,
- Schools are committed to being clear in their communication with parents and carers about the places available, providing you as much notice as possible,
- Schools will not open if national scientific advice indicates it is not safe to do so.

### **What we are doing at Heathwood Lower School**

It is not straight-forward to redesign how we teach and care for our children in this new context, and our priority is to make sure we keep everyone as safe and well as possible.

We are working out what we need to do to open the school to our Pre-School, Year R, Year 1, and vulnerable/ keyworker/EHCP children. A fundamental part of our approach will be driven by the physical size of the school, which is also likely to mean we need to have fewer than 15 children in a class. For this reason, we are looking into part-time schooling, with extra time allowed for cleaning.

We are going through the risk assessment very carefully and two of the Governors will be doing a site inspection with Mrs Dove to see how best we can implement the guidance, and whether we can safely re-open once given the Government go ahead.



We are also working hard to find new sources of hand sanitiser and cleaning sprays, as we are struggling to get enough supply of these.

**Even with our best intentions, this is not going to look or feel like a normal school experience. We know our children will find it strange and there will be many more restrictions on what they can do, and how they play. Our focus initially will be mainly on emotional support and wellbeing, rather than academic attainment. We also intend to use the same timetable as we publish on our website for you to use at home – this means there can be some continuity between schooling at home and at school. We know parents and carers will need to make a choice on whether they feel it is appropriate to send their children to school. Please be assured that children will not miss out, and parents and carers will not be fined if they choose to keep their children at home.**

As soon as we know what is possible, and as more guidance comes out, we will provide further information.

In the meantime, please do let the school office know if you would like to take-up the EHCP/keyworker provision, or if you would be interested, in principle, in any part-time provision for Class R/ Year 1 if we can offer that.

We know these are difficult times, and that uncertainty can be very stressful. Our Heathwood children are very much in our hearts and we are looking to do the very best by them, and to be supportive and kind.

Stay safe

Heathwood School Governors

