

8 July 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

I would like to thank you for your continued help during the Covid-19 crisis and the lockdown. I do not underestimate the sacrifices many of you have made and are continuing to make to help reduce the risk of infection for us all. I do hope that you have found the Care First website and helpline of use to you during this time, please do make good use of it for yourself and your families.

It is really exciting to have been able to welcome a larger number of children back to school since June 1st and to hear about their delight to see their friends and their teachers. I know that the cautious and caring phased return for children in the government's target year groups has been welcomed, but I also do understand that some of you have been concerned about not having opportunities for your children to attend school if they are in other year groups.

The Prime Minister retracted from the government's earlier ambition that all primary school children would return for face to face schooling before the summer break. The change in government policy was because the scientific and medical advice is clear that they cannot relax the requirements to have not more than 15 children in any group, until after the summer holidays and that the schools do not have sufficient staffing or rooms to accept more children back at one time whilst this requirement remains.

I am delighted however that at the end of last week the Government shared their plans for September. They are clear that their intention is for all children to return to school full time in September and schools will be able to teach full class groups and all of our schools are now preparing for this. Schools will still be expected to maintain rigorous infection control and keep groups of children in protective 'bubbles' by minimising the contact between the class groups at the start and the end of the day and at lunch and play times. Rigorous cleansing and hygiene measures will continue to be in place and children will not gather as a whole school for assembly or sports activities. So, school will continue to be different from before the lockdown and we need to be prepared for this to be the 'new normal' and for us to need to operate in this way for the full academic year.

There will be much to be done during the summer break to prepare for the return of all of your children to include essential maintenance, cleaning and redesigning the classroom spaces to maximise distancing between pupils. School will start for the children during the week of the 7th September. They will still have scheduled start and finish times for each group and an early finish on a Wednesday to enable us to ensure that the school is fully COVID secure.

Since the 1st June we have closed before lunch on a Wednesday. This has been a particularly effective measure to improve infection control across the school. Whilst we are still living with the virus we will continue with this strategy. We will give all the children lunch on Wednesday and then will provide children with independent learning activities to undertake in the afternoon, building on the really positive work they have done during the lockdown. Your headteacher will inform you of the specific arrangements in your school.

I know that the lockdown has been eased and we are all delighted that life is returning to a more normal pattern, but the virus has not gone away and we all need to remain alert if we are to keep ourselves, our families and our communities safe.

I can assure you all that we have strong infection control measures in place in our schools and will do all that we can to ensure that your children are protected and of course provided with a high-quality education both now and as we return to the 'new normal' in September.

I thank you for your support for home learning and do ask for your continuing support during this crisis and for our fantastic staff, who have worked professionally throughout the pandemic and continue to have the best interests of your children at the centre of everything they do.

I do hope that you have a fantastic summer, and that the weather stays kind to us all.

Stay alert and stay safe at this strange time

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Samson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S' at the beginning.

Sue Samson
Chief Executive Officer
University of Chichester Academy Trust