



13 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you and your families are safe and healthy. I have spoken with a number of you over the past weeks and have welcomed the opportunity to hear how you have been home-schooling your children and managing the challenges of the current situation. Thank you for your positive feedback regarding our online learning and the lengths you have gone to in supporting our staff whilst home-schooling your sons and daughters. I wrote to you recently to reassure you about your child's schoolwork. Whilst we are hopeful that our students have been kept engaged with online learning and have completed the work set by teachers, we fully understand the difficulties posed when trying to home school your children during a time when their physical and mental wellbeing has been affected. Any gaps in learning will be addressed when children return to school by teachers who are aware of the challenges you have faced.

As you will no doubt have heard over the past few days, the government has mentioned the re-opening of schools. It is important that we wait until next week before making further announcements regarding the plans for the future. It would be unwise to circulate information which may then change, causing further uncertainty. I will write to you all again as soon as we have definite plans.

I want to reassure you that any decision regarding the education of your children over the coming months will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff. Whilst we must adhere to government guidelines, we will also work with students, parents and our community to keep everyone safe. At no point will we rush to re-open to excessive numbers of students or in a manner which puts any member of our community at risk. I also understand that some of you will be reluctant to send your child back to school at this time. Our aim over the coming months is to work with all families to ensure that any decisions are the right ones for our students' safety and education.

Over the past few weeks, myself and our Senior Leadership Team have been busy discussing how we can adapt our school site and daily routines to keep staff and students safe. Whilst this poses challenges, we have already been purchasing safety equipment and amending our school site. We have also been able to offer some safety equipment to our feeder primary schools to ease the pressures they are facing at this time. We have done everything we can at this stage to prepare ourselves for the remainder of the academic year.

I am sure that your children and families are anxious at the thought of returning to school. Whilst there are a number of areas where I cannot provide clarity or guidance, I can reassure you that any decisions regarding the 're-opening' of Whitstone School will be taken with safety as the primary consideration. We will continue to work with all members of our school community throughout the coming months.

Throughout the lockdown period, there have been staff in school answering telephone calls, organising work for students, supporting the children of keyworkers and working with community organisations. We will continue to do so over the coming weeks and will be available via Epraise for any specific questions. I can also be contacted via whitstoneinfo@educ.somerset.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully

Mr Guy Swallow
Headteacher