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Dear Parents and Carers,

Following yesterday's Government announcement, I am writing to share our plans with regards to the remaining protective COVID-19 measures in place in school, for the upcoming term and moving on into the summer term and beyond. I have detailed below, how we plan to keep our community safe whilst continuing to offer your children the best possible educational opportunities in what remain challenging times.

As I hope you can appreciate, I am outlining our plans with the caveat that should COVID-19 cases rise, as they did throughout January and February, we may have to change these plans. It is my sincere hope that we will be able to follow this plan without too many interruptions or delays.

We had intended for these plans to be enacted upon our return from the Christmas break but, as it quickly became clear, COVID-19 cases amongst both children and staff reached unprecedented levels. I appreciate some amongst our parent body would have preferred we move more quickly, but ultimately it is my legal duty to protect everyone's health and safety. I believe this was the correct approach, at the time, with the situation we were faced with.

Some protective measures will remain in place, such as extra ventilation, taking learning outdoors, air purification, Co2 monitors, thorough cleaning of classrooms and shared spaces, and the teaching and encouragement of good hand hygiene and health measures such as catching sneezes and coughs in tissues. Staff will continue to wear face coverings in communal areas and when meeting with visitors and parents and carers.

Some other measures will be adopted as we have found them to be of benefit to the children. For example, playing together in year groups rather than a whole school group, as I will outline below.

Playtime

As the children return to school, from the February half-term break, year group classes will again play together at break and lunchtime. We have found that smaller, child-focussed, year group playtimes are calmer, and more conducive to productive, happy play and as such we do not plan to return to whole-school playtimes.

Lunchtime

For our youngest reception children, who have coped brilliantly with eating together within the familiarity of their classrooms, we feel it is now appropriate to start to introduce eating in a different area of the school, at tables, specifically for lunchtime. Having fully reviewed all available spaces and resources available we have taken the decision that our reception children will begin to move to a small, separate classroom area to eat their lunch each day. We will introduce this change gradually, over the coming term. The children will continue to be supported by their own staff teams, ensuring familiarity and age-appropriate practice.

Our Year 1 and 2 children will continue to eat lunch within their classrooms, with a phased transition to using our dining hall once again. One of the benefits of eating within classrooms has been the support the children have received from their class teams at lunchtimes. We would like this calm, and supportive approach to continue, when we resume using our dining hall so have taken the decision that initially Year 2, with the least time left at our school,

will use the dining hall once again. We will support Year 2 to learn the new routines of using the space first and then introduce Year 1.

Parent/teacher Meetings

We have taken the decision to retain virtual Parent/Teacher meetings, for at least this academic year. Listening to feedback from parents and carers, the majority find the convenience of a virtual call, providing privacy and dedicated time with your child's teacher an improvement on the previous model. We will continue to provide alternative days and times for those parents and carers who are unable to attend on the date given.

Staggered drop off/pick up

Staggered drop off and pickup times will remain as they are, at least until our building works have been completed. In line with many other local schools, a staggered approach, to drop off and pick up has shown to have a positive impact on how quickly and calmly the children settle to their learning each morning.

I do appreciate the difficulties it can cause parents and carers when they have children in two, sometimes three settings, but we will continue to work with those families to support wherever we can.

Whilst parking remains limited for both staff and parents, due to work compounds on our site, it does not seem sensible to encourage 170 parents to arrive and depart at the same time. I also understand some families find navigating the pavement, running along the front of the school, a challenge with small children and buggies. Please try to cross over to the other side of the road, when leaving either at drop off or pick up, to aid safety. Could I also ask that you keep your child under your control, whilst waiting to drop off or collect. Children, whether within the school grounds or outside should always remain with you and under your care, never running around a car park or pavement area.

Whilst our building works continue we do not have capacity to provide scooter or bicycle storage but once the works are complete we will review how to offer this facility to all children.

Illness

We await further detailed guidance from the Government and the Department for Education regarding updates to COVID-19 isolation periods but, to date we have been informed: *The Government will remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test from Thursday 24th February. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be **advised** to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least **5 full days**, and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days*

As in pre-pandemic times, we continue to encourage you to keep your children at home, if they are poorly, whether that be with COVID -19 symptoms or any other illness.

Enrichment

It has been wonderful to see the library being used with such enthusiasm and pleasure once again. The library will remain open for all year groups.

The Forest School and school garden have remained open and available to all year groups, throughout the pandemic. As the weather improves year groups will once again take their learning outside and utilise these facilities fully.

Assemblies have remained virtual this academic year as we have found this to be the most useful way of maximising learning time. We will keep this under review but will be moving towards year group celebration assemblies next term.

We intend to resume visits and trips, for all year groups this term. Some children will begin horse riding with Riding for the Disabled at RMA Sandhurst, from this week and Reading Champion visits will resume later this term. Our traditional year-group trips are being planned and barring any changes in guidance or staff shortages will go ahead in the summer term.

Wraparound care will resume as soon as SCL gives us the go ahead that they have recruited suitable staff. I will update you as soon as I am able to.

Inviting Parents and Carers to summer term events will be kept under review, with the sincere hope that we will be able to ask you to join us in sporting events, end of year celebration events as well as classroom visits and tours of the school. These may not take the form they previously did, pre-Covid but it is our intention to offer new experiences, for you and crucially, placing your children's interests at their heart.

Wider Support

External agencies such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, behaviour support and educational psychologists have been working with our children throughout the pandemic and this will continue.

I appreciate, for some of you, the more cautious approach we have taken has led to frustration at times, it has saddened me, over the last term, that a small number of parents have chosen to send messages and approach staff in what I consider to be an inappropriate manner. I would have hoped that all parents and carers would know that decisions are only made with the best of interests of the children at heart.

I apologise for the length of this letter but felt sharing details in this way would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Miss K Aldred