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**Houghton Conquest  
Lower School**

Growing together

**Headteacher**  
Miss C A McCarthy

13<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### Coronavirus update

I am sure many of us watched the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday evening hoping that it would give some clarity over the reopening of schools. Whilst we are waiting for further guidance from our local authority, and formulating plans as a cluster of schools to promote continuity, our provision continues to run for a limited number of children – those classed as vulnerable and the children of key workers.

We will continue to assess the demand for this key worker provision during the next few weeks to allow us to plan for any changes to the provision alongside the potential for schools reopening. To help us to do this please email [office@hcschool.org.uk](mailto:office@hcschool.org.uk) if you believe you are a key worker and require access to this provision **and** have not done so already. As has been demonstrated already, many parents working in these 'key worker' sectors have been able to ensure their child is kept safely at home. Houghton Conquest Lower School will be **open** during the May half term holiday (26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> May) for children of key working parents and vulnerable children; however, excluding the Monday bank holiday of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May.

The Government anticipate that we may be able, from the week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June, to welcome back more children to school, provided that the 5 key tests set by government justify the changes at the time. Ahead of confirmation that these tests are met, we are carefully planning the return of small groups of children for our early years (Pre-school) setting, reception and year 1, alongside priority groups. We are also seeking further clarification with regards to supporting our Year 4 children with their transition year. The Government want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows, with the ambition to bring all primary year groups back, possibly for a month, before the summer holidays.

We will only welcome back additional year groups if the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus indicates it is appropriate to have larger numbers of children at school. The safety of children and staff is our utmost priority.

Initially, we will reduce the number of children in classrooms and put protective measures in place to reduce risks and to help prevent the spread of the virus either with direct transmission (for instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing) and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces). A range of approaches include:



- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds
- promote the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach to respiratory hygiene
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often
- minimising contact by altering classroom layout, size and staggering break times

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and so we are planning that children only mix in a small, consistent group that stay away from other people and other groups. We are advised that, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor is low risk. We are planning which, of the suggested year groups, will return first and what this phased approach will look like.

We are giving careful consideration to the numbers of pupils in each small group, classroom layout, the timetable, including activities which can take place outdoors, staggered drop-off and collection times and how we can reduce movement around the school. We have a limited number of teachers and we are trying our best to propose a plan that promotes continuity for our children.

Whilst we are planning our phased reopening please rest assured we are taking a cautious approach to reopening, planning, and assessing the risk this may cause, as ultimately our utmost priority is the safety and welfare of our children and staff. I will be sending out further information which will include the proposal of how we might return children to Houghton Conquest Lower School, alongside the safety measures we are adopting, soon.

By the end of this week, we will be sending out a survey to allow us to clarify your thoughts and feedback regarding your child's return to school. This will give you an opportunity to let us know whether your child/ren will be returning to school this academic year. The government have clarified parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools will not be held account for attendance levels.

Please also make sure the school office has your current contact number and email, if they have changed recently and please make sure you notify us of any changes to medical information.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and support during this time, it is greatly appreciated.

Take care.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Heaslip". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Miss J Heaslip  
**Acting Headteacher**