



MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

He who loses money, loses much; he who loses a friend, loses much more; he who loses faith, loses all
– Eleanor Roosevelt

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Possible reopening of school to more pupils in June

I hope this letter finds you and your families well.

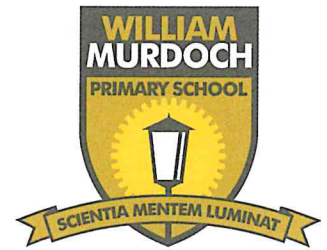
Following on from my letter to you last week, the governors and I wanted to update you on the current position around the potential wider opening of William Murdoch Primary School to children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from the 1 June 2020, if the government advice is to do so. The government will make a final decision on the wider opening of schools on 28 May 2020.

We have been using government guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) as well as trade union and Birmingham Local Authority advice and guidance to determine if and how we can make school as safe as possible for extra pupils after the half term. We are still in the midst of a deadly global pandemic. I have a duty of care to all my staff, pupils and their families and I am not willing to rush a decision that could compromise the health and well-being of anyone in my care.

The decision has therefore been made that **William Murdoch Primary School will not be opening more widely on the 1 June 2020**. I will explain further in this letter some of the processes that have been followed to reach this decision.

In my twenty plus years in the profession, this has been the most challenging time I have had to navigate. What stands out as a beacon of light is my amazing staff, children, parents and our wider school community who have made every effort to rise to the challenge. In a very short space of time a lot has been achieved:

- CGP workbooks and exercise books were purchased and distributed to children before the lockdown began
- The development of the school website was brought forward so that a home learning platform could be developed allowing homework to be shared on a weekly basis
- We have enabled access to a wealth of online resources including Times Tables Rock Stars, MyMaths and others
- Mr Panichi has recorded and shared stories
- Services for Education Music Service, one of our partner organisations, have been contracted to provide one to one music tuition and access has been enabled to a range of music videos they have prepared so that children can continue practicing playing their instruments
- Food parcels have been delivered to families in need
- Direct pastoral support has been provided to many children and their families
- Although it has been challenging for all concerned, we have ensured supermarket vouchers are available to those families who are eligible for benefits related free school meals. Please note the government has announced there will be no Edenred Free School Meal vouchers for the half term week
- The site and buildings have been maintained and the administration team continues to respond to emails requesting support
- Staff have made well-being phone calls to all pupils



I am very grateful to colleagues who have worked hard behind the scenes to make much of the above a reality and gone above and beyond their duty of care to ensure our children and their families are supported, whilst dealing with their own commitments, illnesses and bereavements. I am grateful to you as parents for all the support and cooperation you have given to the school, whilst facing your own challenges, be they financial, physical or emotional. We know that some of you have experienced the death of loved ones during this period and I wanted to pass on our deepest sympathies for your tragic loss.

I shared earlier this week a letter from the leader of the council, Cllr Ian Ward, in which he states: *We trust that headteachers will make the right decisions for their school communities. No school leader wants their school to be closed for longer than is absolutely necessary but all will put the safety of their pupils and staff first when deciding when their school can start to admit more pupils.*

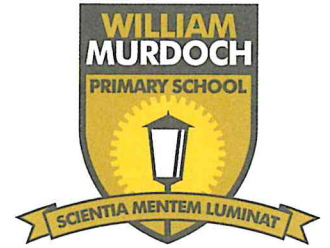
Myself and the senior leadership team have worked with governors to undertake a comprehensive risk assessment process. I have attended virtual meetings with the Director of Education & Skills for Birmingham and the Director of Public Health for Birmingham, as well as virtual meetings with local headteachers in the Handsworth Consortium of Schools. We have surveyed the parents of children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 about the health of their child and families and asked if they would send their child to school if we were to open. **Responses received from parents show that only 18 from a possible 338 parents would send their child to school** and many of those expressed a reluctance. This shows that confidence in our school community for a phased reopening of the school is currently very low and that is totally understandable. It is also reflected in a staff survey that has been conducted.

I am currently working with my staff and governors on a draft action plan for the reopening of the school. This includes looking at the organisation and management of staffing, the availability of space and its use, effective infectious disease hygiene and cleaning following new guidance received only yesterday, maintaining social distancing at various points in the school site, the use and availability of PPE, catering arrangements, the management of play and the use of equipment, and managing staff and pupil sickness amongst many other things. When this process has been completed and approved by Birmingham Local Authority I will share the details with you.

We want nothing more than to see our children back at school as soon as it is safe to do so. We miss them and their families dearly. It is immensely frustrating and disappointing that we are not able to interact with our children, and they themselves are not able to play and socialize with their friends. The risks are presently too great, and any benefits are not strong enough to override these. I would be endangering the lives of my staff, our children and the community we serve if we rushed a wider opening. This is not a race we want to win!

I will be reviewing the situation regularly with my senior team, and once we have received further reassurances, and the local and national situation improves, and our ongoing risk assessments indicate it is safe to do so, we will look to start a phased reopening of the school in a safe and measured way. I will keep you updated and give you as much notice as possible when a decision to reopen to more staff and pupils has been made. I appreciate your support and understanding at this time as we try to find a safe solution.

With nearly 95% of parents surveyed wanting their children to remain at home we will continue to provide a platform for remote learning through the COVID-19 section of the school website. We have also purchased workbooks costing more than £5000 which will be distributed to all pupils from Reception to Year 6. More information will be given about these, and other plans including induction



arrangements for Year 6, in my next letter to you. As next week is half-term, the usual home learning packs will not be made available and instead ideas for fun and creative projects you can do with your child will be uploaded to each year group's page within the COVID-19 section of the school website.

If your child or you have any questions, please get in touch and I will put together either a personal or collective response. We remain open for a very small group of children of critical workers. I am grateful to critical workers who have managed to keep their children safe by keeping them off school. I understand some of you may now need childcare, please get in touch to discuss this.

For now, I would strongly recommend keeping yourself and your family safe by staying at home where you can and following strict social distancing. The virus has not gone away; keep your loved ones safe and tell them how much you love them.

On a more positive note I would also like to take this opportunity to express our best wishes to all our families who will be celebrating Eid at home. Eid Mubarak to you all!

Stay safe. Stay well.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M Singh', written over a white background.

Mr M Singh
Headteacher