



## HIGH HESKET C of E SCHOOL (VC)

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Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Parents,

It is wonderful to announce that High Hesket CE School has successfully opened for our Key Worker children after such a long period of closure. We are hopeful that this means we can safely continue on our journey towards wider reopening in line with the Government plans and are continuing to look at how this can be achieved as quickly and as safely as possible. I would like to thank the staff for their incredible hard work during what has been a very intense and challenging period over the last few weeks but we are so relieved to see our children beginning to return to school as part of our phased reopening. I would also like to thank our families for their patience and to our children for always putting a smile on our faces, whether that be through the photos we see from home or from the groups of Key Worker children who have returned to school on Thursday. School is certainly a very different place at the moment as the classrooms are looking rather bare due to the protective measures we have had to put in place; we are working in a very different way to normal but the children's resilience has been remarkable.

### Key Worker provision

We are continuing to receive many more requests for Key Worker places which we are doing our best to accommodate although we are very close to capacity in our current groupings. It is crucial that we continue to support the return to work for those who are critical to the Covid-19 efforts and school must prioritise these places as outlined by the government guidance. However, it is also important that we manage to sustain these places for those who need to access them and would ask that, before you request a place, you ensure that it is to enable members of your family to return to work. We fully appreciate how much the children are missing school and how much our families would like a return to normal, but we can only move forward for reopening if we have the capacity to open more widely. The Key Worker groups are not a return to formal education yet; this will occur once the identified year groups return as part of our second phase and, even then, teaching will remain in line with our home learning materials.

Please be aware that from now on, for any new Key Worker requests, we will need a **minimum of one week's notice** and, if we do not have the capacity to offer a place, we will need to instigate a waiting list approach. If we do receive a marked increase in numbers we may have to open new Key Worker groups but only if we have the staff to do so which will, in turn, prevent us from being able to return specified year groups as planned.

### Wider opening of identified year groups

In terms of the opening up to specific year groups, I know parents are keen to know the future plans of the school for welcoming back Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6 and we are doing everything we can to make this happen. The government guidance necessitates that each year group returning is split into smaller groups of no more than 15. This means that for every returning class we would require at least double the number of rooms and at least double the number of staff in addition to our Key Worker provision. As we have many staff who are either unable to return or who are part time this poses significant obstacles, especially as staff are not permitted to move between classes due to the 'bubble' approach schools are utilising.

In making a decision on which year group will return first, we have to look at projected numbers from our parent survey, available staff and space and the government guidance on how to prioritise. We also have to put safety of children and staff at the very forefront of what we do. We are aware that there has been disappointment that school has not been able to welcome back everyone in line with government announcements but I hope you can appreciate the space and staffing limitations we currently have. I would like to stress that we are doing everything we can.

As always, thank you for your support and understanding. Please direct any queries you have to [head@high-hesket.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:head@high-hesket.cumbria.sch.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Mrs A Harvey