

25<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

**Re: Update 8 from Aurora**

I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well. In my last update on 15<sup>th</sup> May, I promised to write to you again once we had carried out more planning for the wider opening of Aurora's schools.

As we all know, the Government wishes to get primary schools to open more widely to take in children in Nurseries Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. They also want Year 10 students in secondary schools to have some face-to-face contact in school, prior to the summer holidays. In my last update, I emphasised that the ambition to do so from the 1<sup>st</sup> June did not mean that this was a set date for a return, instead it was a guide for schools to use before considering any wider opening, and there were two overriding conditions to be met:

- The Government needed to provide evidence that their *5 Key Tests* had been satisfied
- Schools needed to conduct thorough risk assessments and it would be the results of these that would dictate what, and by when, schools would be able to achieve within the context of wider opening to more children

I will deal with each of the above conditions in turn:

1. The Government has announced that they will make a statement this Thursday (28<sup>th</sup> May) which will indicate whether, or not their *5 Key Tests* have been satisfied. If they have not been satisfied then UK schools will not be able to open more widely at present. The announcement will probably be made during the Daily Briefing at 5pm, which is fairly late in the day, of course
2. Our school leaders have carried out very thorough risk assessments at each school and it is our opinion that even if the Government announces that the *5 Key Test* have been satisfied, it is still not yet demonstrably safe for us to do so during that first week beginning Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

**Therefore, the very earliest date at which any of Aurora's six schools could safely open more widely will be the week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> June. I must stress that this is the earliest date schools might achieve this and not the definite date, as everything is subject to further risk assessments.**

In arriving at this decision, the overriding consideration has been that we will only open more widely when we feel we can minimise the risks to children and adults within our schools. We have taken account of the Guidance documents that the DFE has provided and, in the final analysis, Aurora will always keep the health, safety and wellbeing of our child(ren) and staff uppermost in our thoughts.

I realise that there will be some of you who will be disappointed that we cannot contemplate opening our schools during the first week of June. However, as I have stated to you many times in previous updates, please bear with us – our decision-making has been guided by our professional opinion, which is based upon the most current scientific evidence available to us, and on our robust risk assessments.

I also realise that there will be some of you who will not send in their child(ren), irrespective of when we report that we have made it as safe as we possibly can for you to do so. Rest assured that the things I wrote in Update 7 still hold. We will respect that decision, as it is yours to make. We cannot make everything zero-risk. However, we will try to limit any risks to an absolute minimum in order for you to make your choice when the time comes.

I would now wish to address some other matters, assuming that there will be a date when we are able to open more widely:

- Children in the designated year groups, will be taught in much smaller class groupings than is usual. The Government guidance says ‘no more than 15 in a class’. From our initial risk assessments of classroom sizes in most of our schools, group sizes will probably be smaller than 15.
- Each group of children will stay together, with one or (usually) two adults, in a ‘Bubble’. Each ‘Bubble’ will have different break times and lunch times etc., to reduce any cross-contamination, and there will be no mixing of children or adults between ‘Bubbles’. Should anyone in a ‘Bubble’ develop or display any symptoms, then every person in the ‘Bubble’ will need to be leave the school site and isolate themselves at home, until any subsequent test for Covid-19 is found to be negative or positive. Your child’s school will communicate clear protocols about what will happen if anybody shows symptoms, or if a case of Covid-19 is confirmed.
- Parents of children who are currently accessing the Childcare provision for Keyworker Children and for Vulnerable Children, and whose child is also in one of the designated year groups for wider opening, will need to make a decision about whether they want their child to continue in the Childcare provision or to go into a ‘Bubble’. Please note that it will not be possible for such children to access the ‘new’ school provision ‘Bubble’ and also to access Childcare provision, either at the start or the end of the working day. The reason for that is

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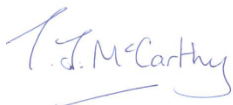
simply that we cannot risk cross-contamination between 'Bubbles' and the Childcare provision. Schools will discuss this with individual parents who may have this choice to make.

- At The Gatwick School, plans are in place to open more widely as above for Reception and Year 1 (there is no Year 6 yet at the school). However, parents/carers may have seen a recent press piece naming The Gatwick School, alongside all the other Crawley secondary schools, as one that would not open more widely for children until at least 15<sup>th</sup> June. I need to stress that this only refers to year 10 students and that Mr Roessler and his team will be in touch directly with parents/carers to explain their plans for Year 10.
- Whenever we do open our schools more widely, we will need everybody to respect the new school 'environment' and in particular to ensure that the 'Bubbles' operate safely and effectively. I trust that you will understand why we will need to enforce amendments to our behaviour policies quite strictly, which will be necessary if we are to preserve the integrity of each 'Bubble' in every school. Therefore, we need your support in impressing upon your child(ren) just how vital it is for them to follow the rules, which have been devised to keep them and everybody else safe and well.

As a summary, I have updated the FAQ sheet at the bottom of this letter

Thank you for your unstinting support and patience during this whole situation. Please continue to take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

With my very best wishes to you all



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**Frequently Asked Questions – Updated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

QUESTION	RESPONSE
What Year Groups are we talking about when the Government refers to the ‘wider reopening of schools’?	Children in Nursery; Reception; Year 1 and Year 6. There is also an ambition for Year 10 students to spend some ‘face-to-face’ time in school before the summer holidays (this will only apply to Aurora at The Gatwick School, of course)
When will the Government say that its 5 Key tests have been satisfied?	An announcement is due on Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> May. If the Tests haven’t been met, then UK schools will not be able to open more widely just yet
<b>When is Aurora planning for these year groups to go back to school?</b>	<b>The very earliest that any Aurora school might be able to open safely is during the week beginning Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June. However this is not a definitive date.</b>
Will all children in these year groups go back at the same time?	Probably not – each school will have its own plan and this new ‘wider opening’ may start slowly at first. Each school will communicate their individual plan to you.
Will the childcare provision for children of keyworkers and for other vulnerable children continue as usual?	Yes. The provision that has been operating since Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> March will continue, including through the forthcoming May Half-Term week (with the exception of the Bank Holiday Monday)
Is it the law for schools to open more widely for these year groups?	No. The plans made by the Prime Minister and the Government are recommended only. The legal responsibility as to whether (or not) to open schools more widely, rests with the Trust (or with Local Authorities for LA schools). The Government Guidance published on 14 <sup>th</sup> May is very clear on this.
What are Aurora’s schools doing right now?	Initial plans have been drawn up and schools are engaged in arranging for staff reorientation training and for deep cleaning of buildings to be carried out
Will all of Aurora’s schools have the same plan for opening more widely?	No. Each school will have a different plan based upon the layout of buildings and the number of staff available to accept more children.
What will happen if your risk assessments conclude that it is not safe for an Aurora school to open more widely?	In that case, we will not open the school more widely. Health and safety of children and adults will be our primary consideration.
Who will tell us what is going to	Each school will communicate directly with their own parents.

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happen at our child's school?	This is because each Aurora school will have a different plan.
I am still very worried about my child's health and safety. What will happen if I do not send my child back to school?	Aurora will not enforce attendance and neither will the Government. Parents will not receive a penalty or fine for non-attendance. Our approach is that we will plan for exactly what we believe to be safe and then will encourage you to send your child to school. However, you as parents and carers can make an informed choice whether or not you do so.
Will my child(ren)'s school still send work home if my child(ren) are not attending?	Yes. We will continue to provide regular home resource packs, as well as online learning, where that is possible.
My child is in a year group that has not been identified above. What will happen for those year groups?	The Government has stated that it is their 'ambition' for other pupils in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 to spend 'at least a month' in school before the summer break. They also say that this would happen only 'if feasible' and that it 'may have to be reviewed'. At present, we are unable to plan for any extra year groups until we have conducted our risk assessments as above. Our best estimate is that the Government's ambitions are unlikely to be achieved by schools – however, we will do our very best to do what we can, and we will continue to communicate with you. In the interim, we will still commit to providing ongoing resources to support all children who are not attending school.

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