



Great Marlow School

HEADTEACHER: Mr K Ford

DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS

Mr G Pendlebury

Mr N Maguire

Bobmore Lane
Marlow
Bucks
SL7 1JE

Tel: 01628 483752

Fax: 01628 475852

info@gms.bucks.sch.uk

www.gms.bucks.sch.uk

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Dear Parents/ Carers

I am sure that you will have watched and/or read the [Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#). Many details have been provided on the phased approach to recovery and the stepped approach to adjusting social distancing measures.

The roadmap to the lifting of restrictions contained in the strategy clearly states that, at this time, we are in Step One and the rate of infection is too high to allow the reopening of schools to all students. Great Marlow remains closed except to vulnerable children and the children of key workers, who cannot be kept safely at home. It remains vital that, wherever possible, children should remain at home.

Step Two of the adjustments is planned to occur **no earlier than the Monday 1st June**. Step Two is particularly pertinent to schools as it signals there should be a phased return for early years settings and Years 1 and 6 in primary schools. Specifically, the guidance to secondary schools is to 'prepare to begin some face to face contact with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils who have key exams next year, to support their remote, home learning'. The strategy document makes it clear that the timing of the Step Two adjustments will depend on the most up to date assessment of the risk posed by the virus; this includes the fulfillment of the Five Tests, set by the government, which involves social distancing measures.

The government has published three documents, as guidance and information for schools, parents and carers to better inform all stakeholders on the planning and preparation for the reopening of schools. These documents can be accessed via the highlighted links below:

- [Guidance for education and childcare settings](#)
- [Guidance on implementing protective measures](#)
- [Guidance for parents and carers](#)

The leadership team and the governors are absorbing this latest information to form a strategy for when and how we, as a school, can reopen to a greater number of students. The final decision to reopen Great Marlow School rests with me as the Headteacher, in consultation with the leadership team and the governors, not the Department for Education (DfE) or the Local Authority (Buckinghamshire County Council). In making our decision, we will take in to account our individual context and particular circumstances as well as the guidance from the DfE.

Every single member of staff, I am certain, is keen to return to school and for the school to operate normally. I am equally certain that this feeling is the same for almost every child! However, it is vital that when students and staff do return in greater numbers that the risks, associated with the transmission of this virus, are minimised. The suggested mitigation of the risks highlighted in the document, 'implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings' do present a significant operational challenge for all schools. Disappointingly, it is clear that the normal

operation of Great Marlow School, like all other schools, is some way away, which is true for the return to normal life for all of us.

I will share with you, as soon as possible, our plans to receive greater numbers of students, but it is unlikely I will be in a position to share any details before Thursday 21st May. All plans will be subject to change: following any updates from the government, or changes to Great Marlow School's specific context.

The government have made it clear that eligible year groups and priority groups invited to attend school on or after 1st June should do. However, no parent or carer who chooses to keep their child(ren) at home will be pursued for non-attendance. At this time, in these exceptional circumstances, you as parents and carers are best placed to decide if school attendance is in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of your family.

In the same context, we have members of our school community who will be required to self-isolate, or household isolate, because they have symptoms or a confirmed case of the virus. This will, in turn, impact on individuals or groups they come into contact with. In addition, there are members of our school community with family members who have, or have themselves, pre-existing medical conditions meaning they will have to continue to shield.

The governors and the leadership team have a responsibility to manage the wellbeing of staff, as well as the students, thus, wellbeing is central to the resource and curriculum planning currently being discussed to facilitate the partial reopening of the school. The challenge is huge: planning for social distancing measures means that, unfortunately, it is likely that a hybrid of remote learning for the majority will be coupled with in-school learning for others.

We will continue to adapt, develop and improve approaches to remote learning. As highlighted in my letter on the 24th April, we are introducing Microsoft Teams to enable 'live' learning conversations to take place; the infrastructure work to support this is almost complete. A number of teachers have, over the past week, piloted the use of Microsoft Teams for 'live' learning conversations with students and the feedback has been very positive. In the letter of the 24th April, there was a link to an online form, that was further highlighted in an email to all parents and carers on the 1st May, for you to give your permission for teachers to use Microsoft Teams with your son(s)/daughter(s). The permission form is available again, via this [link](#). At present approximately 45% of parents and carers in Years 7-10 and 12 have responded.

At this point, I would like to thank you, once again, for your continued support. As I said in my article in last Friday's special VE Day edition of The Voice, your resilience, resourcefulness and readiness on a daily basis to support your children in their learning, whilst managing the multitude of other responsibilities at home, has been remarkable.

If you require additional support, please do not hesitate to contact us directly via email:

- Specific queries regarding a particular subject, contact your child's teacher
- General queries contact your child's form tutor or the Director of Learning for child's year group.
- Safeguarding concerns, please email: safeguarding@gms.bucks.sch.uk

Finally, I would like to be clear that, nothing would give me greater pleasure than the return to normal operations. The governors, leaders and all staff are working towards giving as much normality to the final half term of this academic year as possible, but the health and wellbeing of students and staff will, and must, take precedence.

Best wishes

Kevin Ford
Headteacher