

31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may well be aware that last evening the Secretary of State for Education announced a material change to the arrangements for the start of term for schools in Bromley and other local authorities. The sharp rise in Coronavirus cases in Bromley and high transmission rates of this new strain of Covid has prompted the Secretary of State to delay the return of primary school pupils by two weeks. You will no doubt have seen the alarming rates of increase in Covid locally; schools across the authority are being directed to close in order to suppress the spread of the virus, protect public health and the NHS, and ultimately save lives.

From January 6th (NEST schools have inset day on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> and Jan 5<sup>th</sup>) schools across the Trust will be closed to all but children of critical workers and vulnerable children. This means that the majority of our pupils will be accessing nine days of remote learning until they return in the week commencing 18th January. Our schools are well prepared for this transition to remote learning and we are proud of the quality of this provision and the way in which staff continue to work exceptionally hard to minimise disruption to learning.

The guidance is very clear that schools should be closed to the majority of pupils and only provide places for those who have no other options of childcare to enable home learning. The high transmission rate for this new strain means that it is incumbent on all of us to do everything we can to minimise contact with others and to stay at home. It has been stated that this strain of COVID loves a crowd. Schools are crowded places, even with social distancing measures in place, and I would kindly request that, if you can have your child at home then please do so for everyone's safety. If both parents/all household adults are critical workers or your child is vulnerable and you have no other options, please email the school and by 2pm on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January to let them know the name and year group of your children and the days you will need a place over the next two weeks. You will then be contacted by the school on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January to finalise any placement. There will be no before or after school provision in this period.

Arrangements will be made to provide Free School Meals to those who are eligible but unable to attend school because of these circumstances. Please note that this does not include those children who are eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals. Schools will contact those eligible in due course to provide arrangements for the provision of food boxes.

I know that many of you will be disappointed that your children will not be returning to school next week and we are all keen to get pupils back into face-to-face learning as soon as possible. However, the current national picture with regards the pandemic is alarming and we must all continue to abide by the new Tier 4 restrictions so that we are able to continue to keep our schools and communities safe.

Wishing you a hopeful New Year and one in which the government's planned programme of vaccination marks the beginning of the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yours faithfully,



Paula Farrow. CEO