

JG/LH

18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to give you an update about school following all the news reports, Government statements and media speculation that has occurred in the last week.

I had hoped by today that there would be some greater clarity and that I could give you concrete plans. Unfortunately we are not quite there yet! I would like to let you know what I do know and what my thoughts are for more pupils returning to school, however.

Firstly, I can confirm we will **not** re-open to more pupils on 1<sup>st</sup> June. None of the Rossendale secondary schools will be, I met with other local Headteachers to confirm this and we are going to try and ensure we all re-open at the same or very similar times. Once the government confirms the 5 tests have been passed we will hopefully re-open later in June. I do not yet have a date for this. We have also had confirmation that no parents/carers will be fined for the non-attendance of their children, and I will not be putting pressure on you as parents/carers to send your children in if you do not feel it is safe for them to do so. Clearly, if either your child or anyone in the family home is vulnerable for health reasons then they should not return to school yet. It is worth remembering we have remained open throughout lockdown, including in the Easter holiday, for the children of key workers and our most vulnerable children. Currently, we have around 15 pupils in school each day. I can say with certainty having worked with these pupils over the last 8 weeks, that children cannot social distance. We work to try and ensure social distancing, pupils are spread out in large classrooms, the dining room looks very different and everyone is washing hands and using hand sanitiser frequently. However, on the way to and from school and at break times the children naturally move towards one another. I cannot therefore, promise that when we reopen to more pupils we can keep children 2m apart at all times. I have a child of my own in Year 10 at a different local school and fully appreciate that this will be a difficult decision for all of you. It would help our planning if you could let us know if you would want your child to attend school. More details below.

Whilst we are currently planning for a return for year 10 and year 12, I have no specific details ready. It is likely that there will be a rota in place, staggered arrival and departure times, and pupils will not be in for full days or everyday initially. We will try to put in place measures to create social distance, but as I said above we cannot guarantee it.

Please be assured that all staff in school are desperate to return and to see the children face to face. The work they have been doing from home has massively impressed us all, but we realise this is not the same. I would love nothing more than to see full corridors and classrooms and the familiar buzz returning to Alder Grange. We have to do this safely however, I need to balance the safety of staff, pupils, your families and extended families along with the wellbeing and educational needs of your children alongside central and local Government updates and Public Health and union guidance.

It is a complex and challenging time. Last week I asked for the views of pupils and as always was blown away with the perceptive and thoughtful responses. I know the most important thing to all of them is getting back to see friends and staff. I will try my best to incorporate this in to planning but they need to be aware that whatever we do put in place for the summer term will not be 'normal' school. They may well be in school on different days to their friends.

I appreciate you would probably prefer something more definite from me, but I cannot give you details yet. Plans are likely to include reviews of work, small groups, staggered start times and hopefully some input from subject specialists alongside form teachers. As soon as I have detailed plans I will ensure I share them.

For other year groups, I have not got clear plans yet, but if we can make plans to see your child I would love to do this. Those of you with children in Year 8, look out for option choice information after half term. Similarly, for those in Year 11 there will be information about some work to help prepare for sixth form courses after the break too.

In the meantime, keep doing what you are doing so well, by encouraging your children to engage in the tasks set and checking in to form groups. Also continue to enjoy this additional time together, encourage new hobbies, exercise and mindfulness. We may never get this opportunity again. Next week is half term, so there will be no new work set. I suggest we all have a break and have fun. As ever, please get in touch if you have any queries or questions or simply want to share how you and your child(ren) are doing. I really do love hearing from you.

All my best wishes, take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Griffiths', written in a cursive style.

Jo Griffiths  
Headteacher

For Parents of Year 10 and 12 only: Please email [reception@aldergrange.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:reception@aldergrange.lancs.sch.uk) to indicate if your child would **NOT** be attending school, if we return in June.