

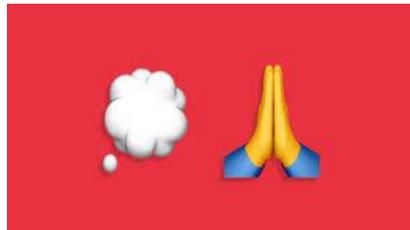


Rigby Lane, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 2EP  
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Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent Carers

I hope you and your families are well, and I write that again this week knowing some of you are going through this personally or with close family members. As Rigby family you are in our thoughts and prayers, and please know we are here to support however we can.



Today I am writing to you, as honestly as always in order to hopefully eradicate any worries you may have and to help you feel more settled at this confusing time, and although I try to remain professional, I am a Mum of two teenagers, I am a wife of a Head teacher, and I am a Head teacher of a school that runs through my veins since I entered it over 20 years ago, and I think I would be doing you a disservice if I didn't say it as I think, in the hope that my honesty, and reflected emotions of my team, goes some way to reassuring you at this time.



We are now entering the 8<sup>th</sup> week since our world changed. I have been incredibly grateful to you all as our families, for your strength, resilience, support and positivity during this period. I am as equally thankful and grateful to our staff who have worked tirelessly throughout this time too. Contrary to some ignorant comments in the media, teachers and school staff have not 'been on holiday' for this period of time! Whatever their role, they have been working on associated and relevant tasks. Some staff have been into work, away from the children, to ensure the school and kitchens are clean, electrics, alarms and water tested; school is safe to use, that orders and budgets are being kept up



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and stock for the school is continued to be ordered. Reviews are continuing to be arranged, written and sent out, letters are still written and posted. As you will be aware, staff at Rigby Hall are extremely committed to their roles and to your children and not one of them has said that they are enjoying this time away or finding it in any way easy.

Up to this point I am proud to say we have all got here together, and together is how I intend us to move into this next period.

I have already said that I will not do anything that will risk the health of my pupils, staff or their families. There is absolutely nothing to justify this risk being taken. Phone logs this week have shown that as parents you are also apprehensive about a potential return to school, as are we. So, please do not worry or feel anxious. Nothing is happening as yet and when it does, you have the right to choose to keep your child at home, without fine.

Over the next couple of weeks, as a management team and governing body, we will look at ways in which we can introduce children back to the building. This will not be them 'coming back to school'. They will not be 'formally' learning. We need to rebuild each and every young person in our school. We need to speak with them and listen to them. We need to offer some form of explanation and counsel for the past few months. We need to explain, when the time comes, why there's only a few of their friends together, and not the whole group, and perhaps not the same staff. This will not be what it was and it will not be 'back to normal'. This will be us carefully rebuilding our children, in a world that has not yet mended.



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Last week we were told that we could now meet one other person from another household in the park and with a 2-metre distance. A great step towards a recovery. However, when questioned if this could be two people with the social distance in place, we were told this was a step too far. Alongside this, we then had the expected news about the phased reopening of schools, starting with reception, year 1 and year 6. As suggested, a model that fits a mainstream two-tier education system. As Special Heads we have met and unanimously decided that these ages are not the 'key groups' for us. We have discussed with the local authority, and the decisions about the increase in numbers and the children who start to phase in will be determined by us as Heads, Senior Management teams and Governors.

Personally, I do not feel that it is safe to come back yet. When the headlines in the local papers suggest that Bromsgrove has the highest death toll in the county, I cannot open the doors of school to any more children than is absolutely necessary until as a town, we are not the ones with this high death toll. This headline in itself is so worrying. As someone who lives locally, I feel very vulnerable even popping to the shop in this town!

If you are a key worker, then we will continue to prioritise these places and we will try to manage this to the best of our abilities, just as we have done since April 6<sup>th</sup> and to this current day with our only break in provision being 8<sup>th</sup> May.

Every time we accept a new child in to our numbers we do so with a level of pressure and risk that is extremely difficult. What if this child, from that family, on that transport brings it in, as this is a change to dynamics? What if that child of that key worker is a carrier and passes it to a child to take home to their family or to our staff? Even introducing one new child to a group brings with it stress and anxiety, so to introduce whole new groups is a massive step and challenging decision to make.

As teachers we appreciate that days can be difficult at home and that you are just waiting for the day your child returns to school. What I would like to stress, is that we feel exactly the same! We want your children back! We miss them, we miss their personalities, their challenges and their successes. We miss teaching them the smallest things that make them feel that they have achieved the biggest! We miss the arguments, the fights and the squabbles as much as we miss the cuddles, the laughs and the friendships. All of these things will return, but not on the 1st June and not for a while yet.



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Even when we start the phased reopening, the children will need to be nurtured through this process. Through the confusion of taped corridors, not being able to play with and share with a friend; something that some of them have just spent the past 6 months learning to do. They will need to be supported when they can't hold hands, can't hug, can't move around freely, can't play with their friend in another class. It will not be 'normal', in fact it will be so far from normal that I think there will be a lot of tears and confusion from children and us as staff! It's heart breaking as it is for the children we have in who spent their first few days 'looking for my friends'. The impact of being in such a changed environment also needs to be considered.

Every child has had to have a risk assessment created for them. For every one of our 166 children, we have risk assessments in place that state whether they are safer at home or not. As families, you have all shown that the safest place for your children is with yourselves in your home. This continues to be the case. Where needed, Sam and I have responded and come out to homes to chat about behaviour strategies, our staff have recorded where they have offered support with behaviours too. Bottomline is that your home remains the safest place for your child.

If your child needs a 1:1, 2:1, medical care, they have underlying medical needs or anyone in your household has underlying medical needs and/or are in the vulnerable category, these remain high risk in terms of interactions that put them and staff at risk and also your families, these children are still considered safer in their own homes.

To have an increased number of adults in the building to staff what we are being asked to do is again another level of risk. The children may be ok, we pray to God they will be, but they can also be carriers and then we have a potential outbreak in staff. This would then mean closing the school for further deep clean and everyone in it would be in isolation including key workers who are currently



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working, for two weeks. There is a huge 'knock on' from the virus effecting just one person in the school building.

So far, we have managed this in the best way we can. The children in aren't social distancing as such. We have tried but they forget and it's not natural to them. They hug us, they cut their leg, cry and want consoling. We're all human. We insist that clothes are washed after the day with us and children are showered/bathed as soon as they get home. They wash their hands numerous times a day. We have provided our staff with PPE for intimate care. We have the areas used cleaned every night after the children leave. This week the play equipment is being disinfected, all the classes and areas in the school are being deep cleaned over the next two weeks, and will then be disinfected. We are doing all we can to the best that we can. We are thankful for every day we get through and every day we get to in school without symptoms. But this feels like just a matter of time...

We, as the wider school team will work together in the best interests of our children and families, and staff. The way forward will be the safest for all. It will come with risk, but for every risk we will minimise it as much as possible, and if it's not a justified risk, it won't happen.

I don't even mind negative comments if you think I am being too cautious. I'll take those if it means I have every single person from our Rigby family back one day, than to do anything against what I believe and risk just one person being affected by this. I can also assure you this isn't a 'lazy teacher' talking, but one who has worked every single day since March 24<sup>th</sup>, along with our school team, to ensure that everyone is cared for and every one of you knows you have a contact at any time you need.

I have an amazing team around me and as a leadership, management and whole school team, our priority will always be our children. Their well-being, their health, their safety, their happiness, their learning (whatever that looks like at the minute) their strength and resilience to get through this is what we are focussing on. We will look at getting them in before the summer holidays as soon as we can offer you something that we believe is as safe as possible and doesn't put anyone at unnecessary risk. I just wanted to say this is our current position. Whatever we do, will be at the right time and in the safest manner.

Apologies for the emotions, and length of this update letter this week! I just wanted to say it as it is. As a school we thank you for your support. Don't worry, don't panic and don't be anxious. Your children are at the heart of every decision, they will not be put at unnecessary risk.



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You have our work numbers if you need anything, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Tracey – 07935 223378 Sam- 07935 223374 Shelley-07716 642824 Ben-07922 425004

Take care, keep safe and keep well.

Tracey and Team Rigby



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