

St. George's Roman Catholic School  
Gordon Road  
Enfield  
EN2 0QA

July 8th, 2020

Dear Parents,

We are fast approaching the end of the summer term, after some four months during which schools have operated under most challenging conditions. I am sure that you as parents have also learnt new skills as you put your oft-quoted responsibilities as the first educators of your children into practice on a daily basis. Many of you have contacted the school to express your appreciation of all that we are doing for our pupils although some of you have hoped for even more from us. Do be assured that we have been learners too during recent months and have devoted much thought and time into identifying the best ways of proceeding that are open to us.

We, the governors, would like to express our thanks to Mr. O'Rourke, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the entire staff, for their hard work and commitment during this extraordinarily challenging time. Since lockdown began, the Head has been in school continuously, there have been at least two members of the SLT in school each day, and teachers, teaching assistants, site staff and office staff have shown their usual commitment in the service of others. This commitment to the safety, well-being and education of our children during a time of national emergency is hugely appreciated by the governors, and the staff continue to have our full backing. We would particularly like to express our support for Mr. O'Rourke and the SLT in the difficult choices they are regularly having to make regarding both the opening of the school and online learning.

When lockdown began, the school was only open to vulnerable children and key workers, with all other pupils being taught online using the DB Primary learning platform. As the school has opened more widely, as directed by the government, and an increasing number of pupils have actually attended, the proportion of our time that can be devoted to the demands of DB Primary has inevitably had to decrease.

Government directives have been to reopen the school to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 wherever possible. At the same time, social distancing requirements have meant that class sizes have had to be limited to 11, effectively meaning more staff are required for each year group. At our school, Reception children were admitted first, as requested, followed by Year 6 given the importance of their final term in primary school. Year 1 have still not been able to return as there are not sufficient staff available.

As more teachers have been required to be present in school, so there are fewer available to manage online learning. Even with all staff fully available, the school simply would not have had the resources to reopen with smaller classes for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 whilst also maintaining the previous level of use of online learning; the absence of some staff for health-related reasons has made this even more difficult. This is an impossible situation, without template or precedent, and frequently complicated by directives from central government that are vague, changeable or issued at very short notice. We gratefully acknowledge the tireless work and positivity of our staff as they cope with the enormity and difficulty of the challenges they face.

Schools have varied in their response to the current emergency and some have made comparisons between the practices of different establishments. Such comparisons are often of little value because schools vary so much in such matters as the proportion of children in actual attendance, the level of staff availability and the flexibility of available accommodation. Nevertheless Mr.O'Rourke and the SLT have always been open to alternative strategies and the adoption of any that improve on current practice.

Central government tells us that schools will fully reopen in September although full plans for this have yet to reach us. Once again, the school will be kept busy planning for a future that is in many ways a huge unknown but the governors trust that parents will join with us in providing the staff with our full support and understanding as we move forward.

Meanwhile, we hope that all who form part of the school community will be able to enjoy a genuine break during the summer holidays, which will restore their energies and enthusiasm for the next phase in our lives, as part of a "new normal".

With very best wishes to you all,

*M.J.Blundell*

(Chairman of Governors)