



**Kender  
Primary School**

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Dear Prime Minister

**Reopening on 1 June 2020**

As a key component of the Covid19 Lockdown Strategy, on Friday 20th March schools were ordered to close - a full week after mass gatherings were banned. Since this time Kender Primary school has remained open for vulnerable children/families and children of Key Workers; open during term time and school holidays. Over this period we have made radical and effective changes to the way we work, which has included training fifteen, and rising, members on staff on the the Apple Teacher programme. Other changes include:

- 100% of teachers now facilitate learning via the online Showbie App
- A comprehensive programme of online Home Learning
- Films and home school communication has been revised and posted on the school website
- Created a 'bubble' cohort of children and staff ensuring minimum potential transmission of Covid19
- Lessons delivered and planned for all children still attending school
- Governing Body meetings rearranged and facilitated
- Facilitated HR and recruitment meetings online
- Revisions to our cleaning rotas/staffing
- Worked with the Local Authority on provisions in Hubs

In short, since the end of March work has not stopped but has, rather, increased. Senior Leaders have followed all guidance with due care for the safety and well-being of all staff and children. From parent feedback the work has been very much appreciated and valued.

I am very proud of the how effectively this school community has adapted and developed these new ways of working.

I cannot say the same of our National Leadership. The Government's handling of this crisis has been widely criticised as shambolic, slow and, from the start, almost cavalier in its apparent lack of urgency. I would concur with this view. It was on March 12th, before the closure of schools, that the Government abandoned the Track and Trace programme that was already starting to take shape. Moving forward to the month of May and this country has the highest death rates in Europe, the second highest in the world, an excess death rate of which we should be ashamed, a devastating crisis in care homes and we are yet to have a full Test and Track programme in place.

**Contacts**

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Then on Sunday 10th May school were tasked with opening for more pupils from Monday 1st June: three weeks to put substantially revised plans in place and with little or no guidance as to how we should do so.

As we move forward we will continue to liaise with our Governors and I will share my lack of confidence in the National Government and its approach with them. In the light of failures already mentioned, it would appear as if the rush to reopen the economy (out of step with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in line with Germany, New Zealand - countries that do have effective programmes in place for Track and Trace) is to divert the public attention away from deaths and death rates whilst further passing blame for others should the economy not be saved in the manner that Ministers are hoping. My fear is that Teachers and School Leaders will come under further blame and criticism should we not open schools within the timetable the Government appears to be promoting - I say appear, from reading of guidance (issued at 7pm - 14th May) it would seem there remains further ambiguity:

‘schools should not plan on the basis of a rota system, either daily or weekly’ - rendering our task impossible and undeliverable!

or

‘schools are not required to use this guide, and may choose to follow alternative approaches to prepare for wider opening, or to use some sections of this guidance alongside other approaches.’

We have done everything we have been tasked with delivering, doing so effectively and professionally. I do really want to be supportive of our National Government as we are in a desperate worldwide crisis. Much has been achieved, I applaud the capacity generated within the NHS, Mr Sunak has taken very decisive and timely action and the Lockdown was effective in halting the escalation of deaths, albeit late in implementation. I am a Public servant and value the role of public service. However, leadership of merit and inspiration is a role that accepts mistakes and is honest. I have yet to hear honesty in this form and consequently have further diminished my view of our National Leadership.

I regret that schools have been put in this position. To use our local context, where 43% of deaths are Covid19 related, we are not willing to risk the safety of our children, families and our staff. There are also clearly issues with excess deaths amongst our BME population, issues which substantially affect our school community. It is not clear that these are understood or that there is any kind of plan to address this. The government’s statements have created an unrealistic expectation that schools can reopen safely, heightened by newspapers with seemingly little care for safety and wellbeing, and I and my governors will work together to plan the full reopening of Kender Primary but only when we are satisfied it is safe to do so.

Yours sincerely



Keith Barr  
Headteacher

On behalf of all governors at Kender Primary School