



10th July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Update 10 from Aurora

I hope that you and your loved ones are continuing to keep safe and well.

This will be my last formal letter to you this academic year. Within it, I wish to reflect upon what has happened over the past few months, mention a few things about the summer and then focus on the plans for the new academic year in 2020-21, from September onwards. Following this letter, you will receive much more school-based information and specific details from your child's school.

There is no doubt that the *Covid-19* national crisis has tested every one of us, both personally and professionally. There has been severe disruption to our daily lives and working routines, and the whole world has had to adjust rapidly to a completely different environment. Since all UK schools 'closed' on Friday 20th March in order to keep open only for children of keyworkers and other vulnerable children, there has been so much that has happened (in fact too much to document here). In my first few letters to you, I asked that you support us during these unusual times ... and you have responded to my request magnificently. Therefore, my first message here is to say thank you to all parents and carers, not only for supporting your school (and Aurora) but also for supporting your child's education so well. This pandemic has been devastating for many families and yet despite that, your response has been incredibly positive and that deserves to be recognised.

As we now approach the end of the school year, may I ask, on Aurora's behalf, that you say a fond farewell and best wishes for the future if your child is in Y6 or Y11, and is leaving us this summer. They have had the misfortune of being in a leaving year group during the biggest crisis this country has faced since the Second World War. I know how very hard they will have been working in preparation for SATs and GCSEs and many of them may feel upset for not having had the chance to 'show the examiners what they could do' in public examinations and tests. We are sorry that they were also unable to participate in the usual end-of-year school celebrations because of this pandemic. However, please do remind them that setbacks are temporary and that their strength of character and resilience will see them through. We remain proud of all that they have become on their journey with us and we know that they will be successful if they continue to keep a positive mind-set. Everyone at Aurora wishes them well for whatever the future holds for them.

This academic year ends for all Aurora schools on Friday 17th July. I have instructed all of our staff to take a well-deserved break this summer, because many of them have been working (either in school or at home) non-stop since March providing educational packs, online learning, in-school childcare and educational provision, plus communicating with you and your child in a variety of ways, either

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by telephone or by video messages etc. Their professionalism is something of which I am very proud and I know that you share that sentiment as I have read many social media posts to that effect in addition to the many of you who have written to me personally to tell me so.

Therefore, there will be no formal school provision at our schools over the summer, although your school may provide you with some details of holiday activities/clubs etc. that your child may be able to access. We also have some planned building works scheduled at some school sites and therefore, in some cases it will not be possible for anybody to gain access. If your child is entitled to free school meals, then the good news is that the government has extended the national voucher scheme, and these will be ordered by your school and you should receive them online.

All Aurora schools will reopen for the new academic year on Monday 7th September for all of our pupils. The actual timings for when each year group will return (i.e. on which days and at what times etc.) will be communicated to you directly by your school. In reopening fully, all UK schools must follow the latest government guidance that was issued on 2nd July. However, I thought it would be best to summarise some of the main points for you to note:

- The government has stated that they consider it medically safe for all pupils to return to school at the start of the academic year
- However, there is still a need for schools to carry out risk assessments to mitigate against the spread of the *Covid-19* virus and to work out the logistics of such a return. A summary of those risk assessments will be posted on our schools' and Aurora Trust websites
- Because the latest guidance is now compulsory in contrast to the current guidance, which is only advisory, there are some changes as regards attendance at school. From September, it is once again a legal requirement for parents to ensure that their children attend school and failure to do so would lead to follow-up action that could eventually lead to fines for unauthorised absences. The only exceptions to this will be for a very small number of children who have been assessed medically to be at risk from catching the virus. These children will be advised to stay off school and for the school to provide online resources to help them keep up with their education
- However, if your child is ill, develops symptoms or has tested positive for *Covid-19* then you must let your school know immediately. There are very clear protocols for dealing with suspected or confirmed cases of the virus while children are attending school; however, we also need to know if your child develops symptoms at other times, for instance overnight, at weekends or during a holiday period. Please also make yourselves aware of how to book a *Covid-19* test, either for your child(ren) or for other family members

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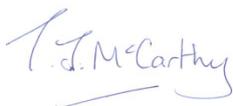
- Schools will operate in 'bubbles'. Your school will communicate directly with you about what this means and how the 'bubbles' will operate. (A 'bubble' simply means a group of pupils who will remain together for education, breaks, lunch etc. and who will be kept apart from other 'bubbles' as far as possible in order to minimise any cross-contamination.)
- The current medical and scientific evidence suggests that primary-aged children do not need to maintain social distancing. However, all schools will still take sensible precautions to help reduce the possible spread of the virus, for example ensuring regular handwashing takes place, that everyone follows the *Catch it, Bin it, Kill it* advice and that surfaces are cleaned regularly. At The Gatwick School because our secondary aged students are becoming young adults, then there will be a need for additional elements of social distancing to be observed, and parents and carers at TGS will receive specific advice directly from the school

I realise that some of these changes may seem a little intimidating and that some of you will continue to have fears about your child's return to school in September. As I have said in previous letters, I cannot guarantee that we can make our Aurora schools completely zero-risk environments. However, we have reduced risk to an absolute minimum and we will continue to follow clear routines that will promote health and safety through good hygiene practices. Probably the best evidence I can report is that in all of our schools since 23rd March, we have had just one confirmed case of a child who contracted *Covid-19*, which proved not to be through attendance at school.

The experience of our schools opening more widely for more pupils from early in June has been incredibly positive. The children in those designated year groups have been very happy and have followed the new rules superbly. Parents and Carers have been great role models by maintaining social distancing at drop-off and collection. Our staff have also reported how having the children back in school has been a source of great joy. Therefore, we are looking forward to all of our children returning to school, this time hopefully without further interruption, so that we can begin the job of reconnecting with them and then continuing their exciting journey of learning. Aurora will not focus on 'recovery'. Yes, there will be some gaps in learning, but these can be filled. Instead, we will look forwards, ensuring that our schools remain safe places to learn and continuing to work with you in partnership to help shape your child's future. It is no more than both you, and they, deserve.

Please continue to take care of yourselves and your loved ones. I wish you a peaceful, safe and happy summer.

With my very best wishes to you all



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