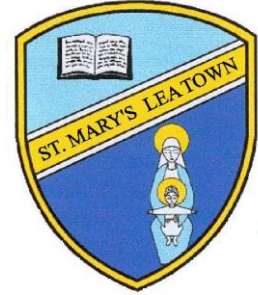


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*'Happy are those who hear the word of
God and keep it' Luke 11.28*

Sunday 28th June 2020

Dear Parents/ carers

I am writing in regard to further opening specifically for Year 6 pupils. Both myself and Mrs. Shoulder have received a number of calls and emails in regard to Year 6 places so I have taken the decision to further write to all families and provide a clear and consistent explanation.

As you will appreciate, in the current COVID-19 situation, safety is of paramount importance. Together with Mrs. Shoulder and the Board of Governors, our approach at St Mary's has to be underpinned by a comprehensive and rigorous Health and Safety Risk Assessment. This has been reviewed and is re-visited regularly, with the last review as recently as Friday 26th June. Notwithstanding the very recent updates/ Government announcements, the guidance for schools has not changed and for the safety of pupils and staff, we adhere to 2m social distancing guidance. Strict cleaning and hygiene measures are in place and currently the hall has been carefully measured and arranged to ensure we can safely facilitate our Key Worker/ Vulnerable children 'bubble' capped at 10 pupils.

The guidance for a 'bubble' states no more than 15 in a group. This relates to a maximum numbers but physical space is the crucial factor. Most of our classrooms will only safely accommodate 5 pupils with the required distancing and would need a minimum of two adults in that space also. Within Year 6 we have 15 pupils and two staff attached to the class and there is no place in school in which this group can safely be together. In addition, it is worth noting that within the current school environment pupils do not 'play' together nor interact with each other or the staff in the same 'normal' manner.

I do understand some parents feel upset and even frustrated that some schools have provided additional opening to other year groups, including Year 6 and that St. Mary's has not. Local Authority (LA) advice stated schools could begin to offer additional openings from 22nd June to reception children, year one children and then Year 6 in that order if 'it was safe to do so', but the LA also recognise that every school is unique (different sized classes, corridors and different staffing numbers) and thus these decisions had to be made at a school level.

I am sure one of the reasons you chose St. Mary's for your children was that our school offers a small, family atmosphere. As such we have a small staff with our TA's and some Teachers being part time and some staff are shielding, and this means in simple terms I do not have the staff to facilitate any further openings at present.

As Head Teacher I have a duty of care to all my staff and pupils. I would like nothing more than to be able to welcome our pupils back. We would all love to see Year 6 pupils back and to be able to say goodbye and complete our usual traditions but this is simply not possible - even if we were able to accommodate them in school, their interactions would not happen in the way they would hope or expect. The times we are in are greatly challenging for all of us and it is unavoidable that things are and will remain different/difficult for some time.

We have worked together as a staff to still complete the leavers books to provide special memories 'virtually'. I am currently liaising with a professional outside agency to prepare well-being resources and a specific transition resource for Year 6. I hope to be able to share this with families within the next week. It is my intention to bring Year 6 back when it is safe to do so to celebrate Mass together, something incredibly special to us at St. Mary's, and to have the traditional celebrations such as the signing of the shirts. This may well be in the new academic year but it is something we will not 'forget'.

I ask that you continue to support us and understand that the safety of Year 6 and all our pupils and staff remains my absolute priority, and recognise that I will not compromise their safety/ well-being. If we can support you in any way please as ever feel free to contact either myself or the staff members in the usual way.

Kind Regards,

Mrs. Brogden
Head Teacher