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*Two travellers are transformed and enriched by sharing their journey with a guide. We view our work to be similar in making a difference to future lives. We travel together on our journey of transformation and commit our school to always being supportive, nurturing and challenging.
Luke 24: 13 – 35*

Friday 12th June 2020,

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure that you are aware that this week the Secretary of State for Education finally clarified the government's position regarding the full opening of primary schools for a month before the end of term. He has accepted that most schools (particularly primaries) do not have the capacity, in terms of both physical space and teachers, to welcome back all students, but went on to say that if schools do have capacity, then government would like them to accommodate the return of more children before the end of the summer term. As a result of this statement, we (myself, the staff and our governing body) are considering what this means for us here at Sutterton Fourfields CE Primary School and Swineshead St. Mary's CE Primary School.

In the last few months we have been asked to respond, usually at very short public notice, to circumstances we could scarcely have imagined as we entered into 2020. Over the past few weeks, we have been tasked with the complete redesign and reorganisation of our classrooms and other learning spaces in school to ensure it was safe for a phased return of years R, 1 and 6. Following several incarnations of risk assessments, this has meant: emptying classrooms of furniture to enable social distancing; sectioning off playground equipment and outdoor spaces; changing the way we offer provision for FSM pupils; a rota for all hand washing and toileting as well as acquiring sufficient PPE for staff. Revised timetables and staffing were then drawn up to allocate staff to these smaller groups, alongside opportunities for the federation to continue to provide work for- and monitor-online learning. By the 1st June, we were able to offer a place to every child in the year groups allowed to return – much more than many other schools. We were, of course, committed to doing all of this and more and thank the governing body and you, the parents, for your support throughout.

At present, because of the physical size of each of our schools, and the structure we have planned for the groups who have already returned to school along with the expanding number of children requiring our key worker provision, I have to be honest with you and say that, unfortunately, we currently do not have the capacity to take children on other year groups at this time while current social distancing restrictions apply and classes are limited to groups of 15 maximum.

We understand that this situation is far from ideal and is frustrating for both yourselves and more importantly, your children. You, and they, will have many questions about the future, some of which we cannot answer ourselves at the moment. We will also be communicating how will we be grouping children, including the new reception children, when they move into their new classes once we know what the Government's plans for September are. As soon as we have details on these arrangements we will contact you directly.

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As a staff, we all feel concerned for the children who remain at home. We know that the vast majority have been keeping up with their learning via virtual learning, but this can never replace the experience of physically being at school. If we were able to bring everyone back safely, believe me we would do it. I am very grateful to the staff who are supporting home-learning and to parents for facilitating this. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed. From next week, I would like to set-up Zoom meetings for families who are home-learning and I will explain more in a separate letter.

As yourselves, I await the next announcement from government to find out what arrangements for September will be. Thankfully, the number of new infections and deaths from Covid19 continue to fall almost daily at present, so we are hopeful that September may bring the opportunity for a normal start to the school year but we can only, like you, keep our fingers crossed at this stage.

As the situation changes so rapidly at present, such as governmental discussions around schools opening over the summer, it is very likely I will be communicating our responses to you as soon as decisions are made. Thank you for your unerring support over the past couple of months as it has made a very difficult situation much more manageable and ensured we have all been able to stay safe and healthy. If there is anything else I can help you with at this stage then please feel free to contact me at school – an email to the school office or a message on Dojo is best at the moment for obvious reasons.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Claire Collett

Executive Headteacher
Sutterton Fourfields CE Primary School
Swineshead St Mary's CE Primary School

