



# Hillside Specialist School & College

Providing exceptional education for all students

Ribchester Road, Longridge  
Preston, PR3 3XB

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Dear Parents and Carers

You will be aware from recent daily news conferences that the Government intends to release information this week on their plans to gradually move away from lockdown measures, the details of which will be made known on Sunday. I am anticipating some information and guidance on the phased opening of schools, but as yet we have no indication what this format will be other than it will take some time before schools return to normality.

For Special Schools, and for Hillside in particular, there are a number of additional factors we will need to consider to ensure the safety of pupils, families and staff when managing the reintroduction of pupils back into school. I would like to share these with you before any announcements are made by the Government, the Department for Education and by the Local Authority.

This week the government are introducing the next stage of their COVID -19 plan of test, track and trace which as a school we will need to consider how we manage pupil and adults in school in the event that any staff or their families are showing symptoms of the virus. This will have a day to day impact on which staff are not available for work and which pupils should not travel into school.

We will need to consider how we support staff and pupils to maintain social distancing rules in the classroom, lunch hall and playgrounds. I have been liaising with the our area transport manager and I am aware of their updated guidance for social distancing while travelling in vehicles, which will have implications on how they will be able to support the safe transportation of our pupils back into school. I anticipate this will be a challenge and a change to our pupil's routines.

The Government has indicated that a phased return for mainstream schools may include prioritizing certain age groups or year groups and may be based on scientific advice. As an all-age Special School we will need to interpret any guidance based on such a proposal and consult with the LA and unions, to develop a workable model.

We have received a limited supply of basic PPE and are awaiting further guidance on what staff will need to wear to protect themselves and others when pupil numbers increase. We are currently operating a staff-intensive system of 1:1 support to pupils in school, with only one pupil in the same classroom at a time to safely manage social distancing. The use of rooms within school is carefully managed so that our cleaners can thoroughly clean these areas each evening, which will be a vital system in managing the building in future weeks when pupils are slowly reintegrated back into school.

All schools continue to remain closed until further notice, but we have been able to remain open for the most vulnerable pupils where we have the staffing capacity to do this. We continue to rotate our available staff on a half day rota, which enables us to have capacity to replace staff and track their contact with other staff and pupils in the event of anyone displaying symptoms or tests positive for COVID19. Staff are now able to access a test if they display symptoms.





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Although we have only been able to support a very limited number of families with placements in school, we aim to increase this offer more widely over the next few weeks by providing a limited number of half day or full day slots to those families who we have identified as requiring that additional support. This is constantly reviewed according to individual need, so I would ask any parent who requires additional support from school to contact me, as I am in school every day, so we can discuss the support they require.

I want to thank parents for your continued support and your patience at this very difficult time. I realize how frustrating this must be for families, particularly as our pupils find it very difficult to cope with changes to their routine and how time in school would help to maintain those routines

My priority is the safety and health of pupils, families and staff during this peak of confirmed cases in the North West. The government message continues to be *stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives*, so where possible pupils should continue to remain at home.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for maintaining contact with you through emails, Google classroom and phone calls as well as those who have supported pupils in school despite their own concerns around the risks of transmission of the virus between staff, pupils and to members of their own family.

The daily feedback I receive from staff has been very positive on the work that is being done by families, while pupils are being home schooled. Please maintain that weekly communicating with your child's class team and continue to share pictures of your child's activities and achievements at home.

I hope to be in the position to write to you again at the end of next week when we have further information from the government on the plans to reopen schools.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Leaper - Headteacher**

**Stay at home – Protect the NHS- Save Lives**

