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Wednesday, 17 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

## REF: WIDER RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Firstly, I want to thank you for your kind messages following my letter about Manasa. It has not been an easy few weeks and the reality of what it means to be part of our pupils' journey in life really hit home. I know that Manasa's parents are keen to explore with us how to commemorate her life and to celebrate her uniqueness in a permanent and special way and I look forward to doing so in the future.

At some point, we will open up a book of remembrance, so that you can add your own messages and bring comfort to those who knew and loved her. If you or your son or daughter needs emotional support, please let us know.

I am writing to you today on behalf of myself and my Chair of Governors, Sally Edwards. You will remember that I wrote to you to explain about the range of checks and improvements necessary to open more widely and that we were expecting the results this week. In anticipation, we instigated extensive remedial actions, so that any recommendations were already in hand if results were of concern. This turned out to be the appropriate course of action, because initial results show that these actions were, indeed, necessary. Frustratingly, we are now expected, according to the HSE national guidelines, to re-test no earlier than 7 days after the chlorination of the system on 18<sup>th</sup> June. Re-testing will take some time to put in place and results will take a further 15 days. I cannot be certain that these results won't lead to further remedial action. We are currently taking advice on whether more work should now be included, given the timescale.

Having fought so hard to re-open and to provide something unique and special for our pupils, I am bitterly disappointed and frustrated, but I have no alternative but to admit defeat and accept we will not re-open, except for the children of key workers and those who are otherwise vulnerable, until September.

We are very lucky to have secured the support of Greenside School, who have offered us the use of their studio next week, so that our year 11 pupils can have a great week and a memorable send-off as they move on to college. We will continue to use Barnwell School site as we are currently doing and we are



exceptionally grateful to them. Year teams will remain in frequent contact and continue to support a wide range of flexible home learning activities.

The local authority have been informed and are fully involved in securing both immediate responses and a permanent solution. They are fully aware of the inadequacies in the buildings used by The Valley School and I am sure that they share my regrets in relation to the continuing impact on staff and pupils and the significant disruption in learning over the last 2 years. I know that, whilst they have been working towards a long term solution, they have also invested heavily in making the buildings safe, comfortable and dependable. They are committed to doing all that they can to address short and long term problems. I know that they are very grateful to the school community for our patience, flexibility and resilience.

In recognition of the stress and anxiety caused by this ongoing uncertainty and lack of routine, I am very pleased that Emma Cole, who is taking over the Pupil Listener role and beginning her counselling training, is available to talk to pupils and support their mental well-being on 07401 453910 between 10.00 and 12.00 every school day. Please do not use this number for any other purpose. She is also working with another member of staff to provide activities for you to use at home to support good mental health. These will be made available on the school website.

Between now and September, I will continue to find ways of providing the very best for our pupils. I have no plans to take holiday, so I remain at the end of an email or phone call and I am sure to be sending out further letters as we approach the new term. Together, we will find positives, we will find reasons to smile & laugh, we will support each other and we will come through.

Thank you again for your continued support, as fellow members of The Valley School family.

Yours sincerely,

Corina Foster

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Headteacher

Sally Edwards

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Chair of Governors