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## St. Anne's C.E. Primary School

Dear Parent/ Carer,

I have this morning received a Local Authority directive telling schools **not to open to wider numbers until 15<sup>th</sup> June**. The reasons cited support the decision I made last week to delay the opening of St. Anne's, which I based on advice from SAGE, the lack of contact tracing mechanisms and the high infection rate in the North-East. This is the LA press release which provides further detail of the directive:

*'Durham County Council has provided the information after new scientific advice was published on Friday 22 May and due to concerns that key issues outside of its control have not yet been resolved. The advice from the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), states there is 'a consensus that evidence on the role of children in transmission of COVID-19 is unclear with a number of gaps in understanding'. It also says there is some evidence to suggest that children are as susceptible to COVID-19 as adults but advised that is not conclusive. Scientists have also advised government that the messaging to parents and teachers had to be 'robust' in order to 'enhance confidence and willingness to return.' The council has also acted in response to data which shows the North East having the highest coronavirus infection rate in the country. Its action is also in response to delays implementing the national Test and Trace system – seen as vital in managing children returning to school. The system will not be fully operational by 1 June, the date previously announced by ministers as when the phased reopening should begin. **The information the council has provided to schools advises that 15 June, the date the government has put forward for secondary pupils to return, is a more realistic date for the phased reopening to begin.***

Cllr Olwyn Gunn, the council's Cabinet member for children and young people's services, said: "Our priority has always been the safety of staff, children and communities and we have issued extensive advice and guidance to head teachers and governing bodies with the emphasis on reopening only when risk assessments have been carried out and found to be of a high enough standard.. And in the light of the new scientific advice, high infection rates and the unacceptable delays in implementing Contact Tracing, we believe **15 June is a more realistic timeline for all schools to work towards**, subject to government scientific advice and individual school risk assessments.

"Ultimately it remains a decision for schools to open when they feel it is safe to do so and I would like to place on record our sincere thanks to all head teachers for the tremendous work they are doing to this end." '

Therefore in response to this new Local Authority directive, I will provide you with a revised timeline and supporting documentation once I have reconsidered St. Anne's Recovery Plan and Risk Assessment. School will, however remain open to children of key workers and vulnerable families throughout.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require further clarification during these uncertain, ever-changing times.

Mrs. L. Sixsmith (Head Teacher)

