

11th June 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

Bertram Nursery Group - Business Update

I hope this letter once again reaches you, your loved ones, and families/friends in good health.

Following on from government advice and months of planning to re-open our nursery settings, our group now has 14 nurseries open. This includes 12 of 13 English nurseries and two Scottish settings (open for key workers only). The remaining 29 nurseries remain closed until we are either expressly given permission by the government to reopen for non-essential workers or demand suggests we need to open.

The question of 'when' additional sites in Scotland will reopen is unclear, however hope to welcome more key worker children back when Scotland is in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Routemap. For children of non-key workers, we do not expect to open before the 11th of August when Scotland expects to be in Phase 4.

To confirm if you apply for key worker status, you must go direct to your local authority website where this information will be displayed. We are unable to confirm if you qualify as a key worker. Sadly some of our decisions are out with our control. However as soon as we have any further updates for our nurseries in Scotland, we will update our website and share the news with our parents and families.

Update since re-opening England sites from 3rd June.

I'd like to thank our teams, in particular our Nursery Managers and the supporting SLT team, who have worked incredibly hard in the weeks leading up to reopening. All our Managers have had to deal with learning and digesting huge amounts of information as they emerged from their time in furlough, to prepare for opening each of their sites. Alongside the many phone calls to their families, their workday was crammed full of important training and re-education to help them transition and adapt to the 'new normal'.

Moving rooms, changing layouts, creating new spaces, all in the name of social distancing and keeping everyone safe. Retraining their own teams, planning staffing and rotas to incorporate the new 'Safer Play Groups', all whilst trying to ascertain demand for places.

To provide some perspective of demand in the first week of opening in England, each site had an average of just 13 full time places occupied. This increased to an average of 18 full time places in its second week. However, following a weekend of significant press and social media news regarding the increase in the 'R' rate for the North West, coupled with more recent news of Primary School opening delays, the numbers of children who actually attended fell dramatically. We understand and appreciate the anxiety and concern amongst our parent community, and whilst we would never impose our view or seek to challenge parents decisions to attend, we would instead prefer to share some words of confidence around our initial observations & findings since re-opening.

Opening comments from our Nursery Managers:-

"We've had a lovely morning so far, very few tears and most children running straight in with excitement. Staff have been incredibly positive too! (Holyrood Swinton)

"I was anticipating some tears this morning, but all of our pre-school children were so excited and ran through the door and have been talking to Leandra and Sophie about how excited they are to be back at nursery (they have all grown up so much!)" (Holyrood Princes Dock)



“As expected, some of the younger children were upset initially but settled quickly. Our older children have all come in with smiles on their faces and seem so happy to be here.” (Dryden Street Nursery)

“There have been a few tears as expected, but all our children are playing happily now, and the staff are a lot more relaxed.” (Holyrood Castleton)

“A fantastic start, everyone is in high spirits, no problems here.” (Holyrood Prestwich)

“We’re all up and running, a few tears from children which was to be expected, but overall a good positive response from everyone. We continue to have children and parents trickle in, staff are all in great spirits.” (Holyrood Media City)

Currently each of our nurseries have been set to operate at just 50% of their individual registered capacity, which we will review as the weeks progress. With current booked in numbers for England we recognise we still have capacity and space for additional children to return and, as demand increases, we will endeavour to adjust our rooms to cater for more. However, where demand is high and places become limited, managers will operate a ‘waiting list’ until more spaces can be safely created and staffed accordingly. This is where we need to ask for your help and understanding. Where parents book a place and commit to return, and then for whatever reason, change their minds, and do not attend nursery or use their place, our nursery managers have been asked to still produce an invoice for the unused place. This is necessary as we will have incurred costs associated with bringing staff back to work based on the committed numbers of children expected.

Where at least 1 months’ notice has been provided, sessions can be altered. Each of our managers will try their very best to avoid unnecessary bills where alternative plans or changes to sessions can be managed. If you have not been offered or committed to a nursery place, you will not be billed, as per our previous coms and [FAQ’s](#). We appreciate everyone’s understanding that our nursery operations must remain financially viable for us to remain open, and we hope you agree we have approached this in the right way.

Our teams are working hard to ensure covid-19 related safety and wellbeing of all children on site remains paramount, using our [Safe Operating Procedures](#) as primary guidance. Please review this on our website and, should you want to review the nursery Risk Assessment, please ask your Nursery Manager.

On a final note, the [link](#) below will take you to an interesting article around the importance of child play and their emotional wellbeing

[Allowing young children to play with their friends must be prioritised as soon as possible when lockdown is eased](#)

Thank you for your continued support and please let us continue to keep each other and our families safe and well.

Kind regards

Cary Rankin
CEO
Bertram Nursery Group