



Downs View

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I know many of you will be both disappointed and potentially angry that you were not offered a place in school or college from 22nd. The leadership team and I are keeping all the issues for every family under constant review.

As you know, earlier today I unreservedly apologised for not contacting some of you about the non-allocation of a place.

I want to assure you that over the next week we will continue to review all of the knowledge we have from your class teachers, social workers etc. in order to help us determine who will be able to attend from 6th July. Many of you though have clearly stated that September is the earliest you will consider, which is fine.

It is the case that beyond your own views of your unique child and family circumstances, I/we have to look at and work out how we accommodate them alongside other complex children and young people. We have limited spaces which means children cannot physically distance and those children require physical contact for support, personal care, walking, doing 'work' or managing challenging behaviour.

I still have my duty to keep all attending children, young people and staff safe. I have to do this too being mindful that more people are going out and about which means that the risks of transmission could be higher now and not lower. And, we are still told daily to protect the NHS and save lives plus the 2m rule is still in place.

Furthermore, I know all of you want your child (understandably) to return to the 'normality' of an outstanding school and college. But, being honest, it is not remotely 'normal' here. Children and young people are working in strange rooms with staff who do not normally work with them. Timetables and routines are different. Neither can they do many of the activities they would normally undertake:

- no hydro or swimming,
- no minibus trips into the community or work experience,
- no soft play (from tomorrow it is being closed because that part of the building is being redeveloped as part of the building programme). Even over these weeks that hasn't been the same as only one child at a time can use it.
- no library,
- no shared play materials/activities like sand and water,
- no collaboration or close interaction – we cannot have children playing spontaneously because they naturally move together or sometimes grab others (not necessarily negatively but for attention and interaction). In addition, a lot of their usual friends are not around.

These are just some of the factors to consider which means Downs View is not 'normal' currently.

So, as I say, I/we will continue to consider further admissions for 6th July but I will still have to prioritise and also take account of the local context of infection levels.



If any of you do want to discuss the overall situation or your unique difficulties with me, by all means get in touch. Teachers will continue to support you but the hard decisions are mine, supported by the SLT. Please do not pressurise teachers for news on places. Their role is to support you at home and I would appreciate that where you do want to express frustration that you do it to me or a senior leader rather than your child's teacher. Thank you.

I repeat this assurance; I understand the strain of family life with a child with SEND or complex needs in the home. I was the sibling of a very challenging brother with severe learning difficulties who destroyed our home regularly and physically hurt my parents and me. We had no respite and certainly not a school which in 'normal' times was outstanding as Downs View is 'normally'. I have not, at any point, taken the decision to keep any pupils out of school or college at all lightly. Downs View 'normally' is as it is because of my life as a sibling and my career as a special school teacher and leader. I know what you are missing and I am desperately sad about that but safety needs to remain my priority. In doing this I know you are presented with significant challenges at home.

If any of you are very concerned about the decision making process and the impact on you/your child, do submit a complaint to the Governing Body via Eric Mayne (Clerk to Governors – ericmayne@downsview.brighton-hove.sch.uk). **The next meeting of the full governing body is next Monday, 29th June.** As with all recent board meetings, the main agenda item is 'managing the organisation during the pandemic' and as part of that the governing body considers/can challenge my decisions and actions over time.

Have a good weekend. Stay safe and well.

Adrian

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Adrian Carver
Executive Headteacher