RETURNING TO SCHOOL – IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL PARENTS AND CARERS

When we return to school in September, almost all of our normal routines and procedures will have changed. Please read this information carefully and treat your child’s return to school as if they are starting in a brand-new school – **almost everything is different**. (Even those children who continued to come to school throughout the summer term will find school different and some of this advice has changed since the end of term).

The most important advice in terms of preparing for school is that NO-ONE IS ALLOWED ONTO THE SCHOOL SITE IF THEY, **OR ANYONE ELSE IN THE HOUSEHOLD,** HAVE ANY COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, however mild. If your child has to miss school because they are ill, please let us know and, in the message, **tell us exactly what is wrong with them.** If your child (or anyone else at home) has any symptoms of Covid-19 they must be isolated (with household members) in line with government guidance and they cannot return to school straight away, even if they feel fine.

**Preparing to start**:

* Talk to your child about social distancing. Please try to remind them that they should avoid physical contact with friends and school staff.
* We have had to rearrange the furniture in the classrooms to prevent children from working where they might be facing each other and to minimise the sharing of equipment. Most children will be given a specific table to work at and they will have to do all of their work there – opportunities for groupwork are very small and children will need to get used to a more traditional classroom set-up.
* We will be reminding your children frequently about their responsibility to protect others by observing social distancing wherever possible and washing their hands more frequently than normal.
* When children return to school, they will come into contact with other children and adults. Although we have done what we can do to reduce the numbers of contacts and the risks involved, school is certainly not a risk-free environment and we cannot guarantee stringent social distancing.
* Almost all classes will be in a class ‘bubble’ and they will not routinely mix with children from other bubbles. Reception, Year 3 and Year 6 are the only exceptions to this – they will be year group bubbles. Children will only go out to play with children from their own class; they will not be allowed to mix on the yard with children in the other class from their year group. Even though Year 3 and Year 6 will receive lessons as a year group bubble and there may be some mixing for English and Maths lessons, they will still be in separate classes at playtimes to reduce the numbers of possible contacts between the two groups.
* Please prepare your child for the fact that, although they are likely to be with some of their friends, they will not necessarily be able to play with all of them. This may be upsetting, but it is to protect them, you, our staff and our local community.
* When you come to school, please make sure you and your children stay 2m away from other family groups. We will be staggering start times to make this easier, but you have to help us with this by following the advice. Please do not come early and wait on the yard. Please do not stay and chat after dropping your children off. Please arrive quickly and leave quickly. If you have to wait for another child, please make sure you stay 2m away from other parents and children.
* Parents and carers will not be allowed into the school building unless it is absolutely essential. School staff will decide whether a situation is essential.
* If you have a question, please email the school or phone the school office rather than come to school to ask in person. Please remember that, if you come into school to speak to our office staff, you are potentially putting them and you at risk. Only one person/family group will be allowed into the small entrance hallway at a time – ideally, no-one will need to visit the office unless you have something to collect or drop off in person.
* Your child will have to bring a packed lunch as our kitchens cannot prepare hot meals at the moment. If your child receives a free school meal, we will be able to prepare a packed lunch for you (this will include all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children). If you want to buy a packed lunch from school, please let us know and we can arrange this for you (several families did this during lockdown).
* If your child brings a packed lunch to school, we will wipe down and clean the outside of the packed lunch bag/box when they arrive in school. We will do the same for water bottles. We would like you to do the same when they arrive home.
* Please only send your child into school with the minimum of equipment. All they will need is: a packed lunch, a water bottle, a waterproof coat, a hat if needed, and possibly sun-cream – no sharing of this and staff will not be applying it for the children. Children can bring one **small** bag to keep their things in.
* **Please make sure that packed lunches and water bottles are clearly named**. If your child’s bottle is not clearly named they may not be allowed to use it as we will not be able to guarantee that it has not been shared by several other children (experience tells us that most children struggle to identify their own water bottle even when it’s clearly named – please don’t expect you child to remember what their bottle looks like!)
* Children **do not** need to bring a PE kit. However, on the days that they are due to do PE, they will need to come into school wearing their PE kit (their new teacher will let you know when this will be). PE has to be done outside, so they will need to be wearing something suitable (e.g. tracksuit, jogging bottoms, leggings and have a warm top and a thin waterproof). Even if the weather is poor, we will try to get the children outside – they must be prepared for this.
* Children **must** wear sensible school shoes that are suitable for running around in as they will be outside a lot of the time. No flimsy sandals, high heels or open-toed shoes please.
* The doors and windows of classrooms will be open for ventilation – **whatever the weather**. Sometimes the classrooms will be cold so children should bring/wear sensible layers in case they need to wrap up.
* Unless it is absolutely pouring down, the children will still go out to play if it rains. This is why they need a waterproof coat (everyday please as the weather may change during the day even if the forecast is good).
* When we return to school in September, children will be expected to wear school uniform. They will be outdoors as much as possible – please make sure they have a waterproof coat and sensible school shoes.
* The most important advice in terms of preparing for school is that NO-ONE IS ALLOWED ONTO THE SCHOOL SITE IF THEY, **OR ANYONE ELSE IN THE HOUSEHOLD,** HAVE ANY COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, however mild. If your child has to miss school because they are ill, please let us know and, in the message, **tell us exactly what is wrong with them.** If your child (or anyone else at home) has any symptoms of Covid-19 they must be isolated (with household members) in line with government guidance and they cannot return to school straight away, even if they feel fine.

**Start dates:**

* School starts on Wednesday 2nd September 2020.
* Your child’s start and end times are as follows:

**Start and End of the School Day:**

We will continue with each class entering and leaving through their own external door, so **please ignore the information that is included with the end of year reports about entrances and exits**.

Given that many classes have doors that open onto the school field, please consider investing in some wellies! We will be using the field entrances for as long as possible - even when it is raining. There won’t be enough room for social distancing on the path along the edge of the field, so you will certainly get wet or muddy feet at some point.

We will also be continuing with the staggered starts:

* To stagger the arrival of families to school, our doors will be open for children to arrive between 8:45 and 9:00.
* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between A-H, please arrive between 8:45 and 8:50.
* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between I-Q, please arrive between 8:50 and 8:55.
* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between R-Z, please arrive between 8:55 and 9:00.
* If you have more than one child and they have different surnames, just choose one of the surnames and stick to that time slot every day.
* **In the mornings, we will not be opening the gates early as we do not want anyone spending more time on site than they need to. Please time your journey to school so that you avoid having to wait.**

With more children in school, we will have to use staggered finishing times as well:

* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between A-H, please collect them between 3:05 and 3:10.
* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between I-Q, please collect them between 3:10 and 3:15.
* If your child’s surname begins with a letter between R-Z, please collect them between 3:15 and 3:20.
* If you have more than one child and they have different surnames, just choose one of the surnames and stick to that time slot every day.
* **Please leave as soon as you have collected your children**.

Our **Nursery** times will be staying the same as usual for now:

* Morning sessions are 8:30 to 11:30 (you can start collecting your children from 11:20 if you wish as this helps to reduce queues)
* Afternoon sessions are 12:30 to 3:30 (you can start collecting your children from 3:20 if you wish as this helps to reduce queues)

Waiting for Nursery children can create a bottleneck as the path is not very wide and we have to be very careful about handing over such young children. Please queue in a line with 2m between each adult and **do not enter the building**.

Even if your child is upset about leaving you, a quick goodbye is much easier for them (and you). We will always let you know if your child continues to be upset but, experience shows us that most children settle as soon as you have left!

If any family is going to struggle sticking to a particular time slot (e.g. if your surname begins with A and you have a child to collect in Year 2 at 3:05 and another to collect from afternoon nursery at 3:20, and you don’t want to wait a long time between collections) please feel free to change your main school pick-up time to suit the nursery collection times.

However, please remember that if everyone does as they pleases it will potentially be busier outside and **all adults must make sure that they are socially distanced and that they keep control of any children that they have with them.**

To make social distancing easier, only one adult should come to school for dropping off and picking up children.

Please make sure that all children are collected on time at the end of the day. We do not want to have to look after lots of children after school has finished because it may mean that children from different bubbles get mixed together.

Please make sure that any childminders that you use are aware of all of our new routines and expectations.

* If you have already notified school in writing that your child can walk home alone, they will be allowed to do so, **but you must ensure they know that they should remain 2m away from other children and families.**

**Before and After School Clubs**

* To begin with, there will not be any before or after school clubs on the school site.
* If we can work out an effective way of providing before and after school care that maintains the bubbles that are already in place, and is still affordable for families, we will try to provide it.
* At the moment, we do not have enough staff or space available to be able to do this as safely as we would like.
* If Spring childcare are able to demonstrate how they could provide before and after school care without compromising the class/year group bubbles, then this could be a further option.
* In the meantime, if you have to use an alternative child care provider, please make sure that you are satisfied that they are able to work within the government guidance and are doing their best to minimise contact between different groups of children.
* Please make sure you share all details of school start and end times with any childminders. If we end up having to look after children regularly at the end of the school day then we may invoice parents/childminders for the additional emergency childcare that we are providing.

**Attendance/Absence:**

* All children attending school who develop symptoms of Covid-19 can be tested. **If your child receives a positive test result (i.e. it confirms they have Covid-19) then you must tell school as the rest of their bubble will also have to go home and isolate themselves.**
* Please report all absence to the school office as soon as you can. Checking the registers in the mornings and chasing up parents who have not let us know why their child is off takes a huge amount of time during a normal school day.
* When you are letting us know about your child’s absence, please tell us **exactly** why your child is off – we **must** be informed if they have **any** symptoms of Covid-19.
* Normally, we would tell you to send your child to school if they were simply feeling under the weather as minor illnesses are part of growing up. However, given the significant difficulties that looking after unwell and unhappy children will cause us in school in the current crisis, please do not send your children to school if they feel unwell (I would suggest that you don’t tell them about this advice or they will certainly try to pull the wool over your eyes!)
* If your child, or anyone in the home, has any Covid-19 symptoms then your child **must not** come to school until the recommended isolation period had passed.
* If your child develops any symptoms whilst in school, we will contact you and request that someone collects your child as soon as possible.
* Children with Covid-19 symptoms can book a test. If their test results come back negative, please still call us first for advice about when we will allow them to return to school.
* If your child has a temperature or cough and then suddenly improves, please do not assume that it is not Covid-19. They (and household members) will still need to isolate. DO NOT SEND THEM BACK TO SCHOOL until the isolation period is over (or they have had a negative test and you have received confirmation from school that it is ok to do so).
* Although isolation may cause families inconvenience, please remember that if we end up getting more than one confirmed case of Covid-19 in school, it is highly likely that whole classes, year groups, or even the school might be sent home. Please do your bit to help and isolate if you need to.
* As well as Covid-19, the winter term often sees a spike in sickness bugs. Please remember that children must stay off for 48 hours from the last time that they were sick or had diarrhoea. Even if they appear to be well, they cannot return to school before the 48 hours have passed and we will insist that you pick them up again if you drop them off.

**Handwashing and hygiene:**

* Please make sure your child knows how to wash their hands really well. They will be expected to do this frequently throughout the school day. They must understand that they have to wash their hands as soon as they come into school, after they have coughed or sneezed and used a tissue, after they have visited the toilet, and before and after eating. Their teachers will also be ensuring they wash their hands periodically throughout the day.
* When children return home, they should wash their hands again, as soon as they get back.
* Please show your child how to cough or sneeze into a tissue and ‘catch it, kill it, bin it’. In case they don’t have a tissue handy, show them how to cough into their elbow.
* Current guidance states that staff and pupils should not need to wear face coverings. If your child needs to wear a face covering for their journey to school, then the adult who has brought them in should take this face covering home with them. If this is impossible, your child must remove their mask/covering themselves and put it into a small plastic bag which they must keep in their school bag until they leave school at the end of the day. Our staff will not help children to put on or remove face coverings and they will not look after face coverings for children.

**The Curriculum:**

* We will be teaching a full curriculum when we return to school.
* To begin with, we will be focusing on getting the children settled back into and happy with their new routines. We will also focus on filling some of the gaps that may have developed in their key skills and knowledge in English and maths. Most classes will begin by covering some of the content that many children will have missed during the summer term.
* During lockdown, our teachers used an app called Showbie to keep in contact and share work with their classes. From September, we will be moving to a more powerful learning platform called Microsoft Teams. Your child’s teacher will talk to the class about this and more information will follow for parents. Teachers will continue to share some work online to make sure that children (and parents) are more comfortable with online learning in case we have to go into lockdown again.

**Behaviour:**

* Clearly, the full reopening of school is a very challenging undertaking for staff. It will also be very strange for your children and they may find it difficult to remember the new routines and struggle when they are not allowed to see their friends.
* We will always try to deal with these issues sensitively, but I would like all families to talk to their children about an increased expectation for good behaviour once they return to school. Our staff will be stretched very thinly across school and we do not want to spend large amounts of time dealing with problem behaviour.
* Under our behaviour policy, it is still possible for children to receive lunchtime detentions, but this is something we would like to avoid as it creates additional problems (e.g. finding a suitable place where children can work quietly without coming into close contact with children from other bubbles).
* If we find it impossible to use any meaningful sanctions with children who misbehave, we will be very reliant on you as parents to support us in school to ensure that your child makes the right choices. Unfortunately, poor behaviour not only disrupts other children’s education, but it could also now potentially put other children and staff at an increased risk of becoming ill

With your help, we will be able to manage a successful and safe return to school for all of our children.

Many thanks for the kind words and support for our staff that many of you have shared over the course of the lockdown.

Best wishes,

Mr Ruffell