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**28th May 2020**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

**Wider reopening of schools for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and**

**maintaining provision for children of critical/key workers and vulnerable children**

As you know, we have been working very hard on our plans to re-open schools, as directed by the Government, who have asked us to ***begin making plans for the return of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6*** from the beginning of June, and to ***maintain the provision for the children of critical/key workers and vulnerable children***.

I am aware many of you will have given the decision as to whether to send your child back to school lots of thought – I know some of you have already responded by email regarding this. You will be concerned about safety, learning arrangements, what we are doing to reduce risk, how your child will be cared for, whilst also closely following the national picture of infection rates and measures in place countrywide. I know this decision been made more confusing by media reports about the position of different councils and by the range of scientific and other information in the media arena. This can make things very confusing for all of us.

Each new report can raise doubts and while there is doubt, Governors and I much prefer to proceed with caution and continue to look at the advice we receive; hence much time has been spent considering all of this in deciding when to move to wider reopening. I explained in my letter on Tuesday that a I had many concerns about re opening too soon. These include:

* The local R rate – at present this is reported as being 0.8, which is double the rate of London – 0.4. Information suggests we are 2 weeks behind London in terms of this. The national infection rate remains between 0.7-1.0 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-latest-r-number>. We know there has also been a recent outbreak in Newton Aycliffe.
* The scientific information released last week from both government and independent groups which raises many safety questions including about the Government’s approach to returning pupils.
* The availability of cleaning resources and PPE for emergency use in school
* The need to be confident in the Government test, track and trace system and for it to be in place and effective (as this has now been changed a number of times)
* The updates from Government on infection rates
* Durham County Council advise is that schools should consider the 15th June as a more realistic opening date
* Testing for under 5’s and advice on self-isolation for those who have been in contact with a child who displays symptoms.

Whilst I had only written to you all on Tuesday with the hope of reopening on 8th June, yesterday I received an email from the Local Authority. After speaking with a school advisor she confirmed that they share all of the concerns and suggest that the 15th is a more appropriate opening time. We will therefore, based on the safety of pupils and staff, **now begin our phased reopening from the week beginning June 15th, 2020**. We hope you understand this decision to proceed with caution and thank you for your patience and understanding. As a Local Authority school we use them as our source of advice and direction and take their recent email advice seriously.

Please note, however, that the school **will remain open for children of critical/key workers and vulnerable children from June 1st onwards**. If you are one of these families who were offered a place but have not been accessing the provision and now need to do so, please contact school and we will discuss this with you. [kingstreet@durhamlearning.net](mailto:kingstreet@durhamlearning.net)

**Whilst I will send detailed information to families of children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 6 next week.** I also wanted to share with you more general information on the plans we are putting in place. I hope this helps you in making your ultimate decision about your child returning to school. At all times please remember we will work with you to support you. No parent, at present, will be fined for non-attendance and we fully understand the reservations you may have and are happy to talk you thorough your questions if you feel this helps you. We understand that the mental health and well being of your child has been your biggest concern as the classrooms and environment will be so different but we will be supporting all of those children who do return and teachers will be basing their curriculum around wellbeing.

To date, we have fully consulted with all council services, including education and health and safety, to ensure that:

* we have **thorough and detailed risk assessments** in place.
* we have undertaken a full review of premises, cleaning, additional infection control measures.
* we have considered all implications and **advice from DFE and the local authority**

so that all members of our school community – pupils, families and staff – can be as safe as they possibly can be.

We must make it clear that at the present time **there *will never be no risk in a world where Covid 19 remains present in the community***. The risk remains with us all until the time when a vaccine is developed, tested and rolled out across the country. It is our job, therefore, to ***consider, manage and reduce the risk*** as far as we can whilst providing the best education for the children in our care.

Each school’s circumstances are different – decisions, therefore, have been made and plans developed based on the ***current circumstances in our school*.** Please note that ***things may continue to change*** in the future – these plans relate to wider opening from 15th June 2020 for some year groups; the Government have yet to share details for the further return of other year groups. Therefore, please bear in mind that ***if circumstances change in the school or nationally*** (including any issues with staffing, health and safety, infection, etc) ***these plans may also need to be changed***. We will keep you fully informed.

It remains vital for the health, safety and wellbeing of all of our children, staff and your families that you continue to be vigilant to any of the **current symptoms of infection** and immediately isolate and organise for a test to be undertaken, if anyone in your family presents with the following:

* **high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* **new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Please keep school informed if this is the case. We will not permit children or staff to attend who present with symptoms.

**When we move to wider reopening and to help school adhere to our plans and reduce the risk of infection, we ask for your support with the following:**

* **Hand washing** - good hygiene is vital – we will ensure regular handwashing; as children enter school and before they leave; before children go outside for break and once they return; in between activities in school, as necessary. Please encourage handwashing at home too. Encourage your child not to touch their face or mouth. Soap and paper towels are available in all classes, as well as toilet areas. We are brining in additional portable hand washing facilities to manage the number of children in school and the increased hand washing needed.
* **Clean clothes** – please send your child to school in clean clothes each day. This helps reduce infection; staff will also change their clothing daily to protect your child. Where uniform no longer fits or you do not have sufficient uniform for a change every day –uniform measures can be relaxed and children can wear normal clothes. The important thing is that each day they are a fresh set of clothes.
* **Social distancing** – only ***ONE parent*** per child should come to school; when waiting to come into school please maintain a **2m** distance between you and other families. Please DO NOT linger for a chat at the school gate with other parents or with staff – if you need teachers to contact you, let us know by telephone or email and they will contact you; this will help us be ready for the next group’s arrival. Please come straight to school with your child – avoid visiting others or going to shops, etc. on your way in. We will have social distancing signs around the school to remind families of this expectation. Where you have a children who have different start and finish times you MUST NOT remain school grounds during this time.
* **When on the school yard please stand on the allocated space which has been socially distanced for you.** Staff will stand at the doorway of the designated yard space (Designated spaces and entry/exit points will be instructed in the next letter sent to returning year groups). This helps us keep the play areas safe for your child to use throughout the day.
* **Main office –** due to the very small space in the office we will be asking that no parents use the office. This is for safety of everyone. If you need to speak to a member of staff or the office please email or telephone.
* **Start and end times will be staggered** – this will help us reduce your contact with others, and staff contact with others, and ensure safety for children (more information will follow for individual year groups). Please adhere to the times.
* **Children’s own resources/belongings** – please DO NOT send anything into school with your child, other than their coat and packed lunch, if you usually provide one. As we will be outside a lot more, please send in a sun hat and sun cream. Please also ensure your child has a water bottle. We will not be sending homework out (until measures are further relaxed) and ask that children do not bring anything in. This includes bikes and scooters at the present time – we need to separate areas of the yard and bikes and scooters should not be sent in to help us with that. We will provide all the stationery children need.
* **PE kit** – please send your child in with a kit that can stay in school for the week – this will help as we may need to be more flexible in organising lessons (as they will take place outside and this is dependent on the weather!) After use we will send the kit home that day for washing before return to school. PE kits can then also be used as a change of clothes if required for other emergencies.

**What else are we doing to reduce risk in school?**

* **Thorough cleaning –** the school has been thoroughly cleaned and continues to be cleaned throughout the time of closure; chairs, tables and all areas children and staff touch are cleaned daily, as well as toilet areas etc. Staff have additional cleaning fluids in classrooms should they need them and there will be no resources in use that carry an increased risk of infection (e.g. soft furnishings, dressing up clothes, etc.) Resources will be regularly cleaned. Daily checks will be undertaken. We have increased our cleaning capacity and our caretaker will now be on site during the day to allow rooms to be cleaned during breaks and lunchtimes.
* **Groupings – our ‘Work Groups’ –** children will be organised into smaller groups, no larger than 10 ( 8 for children in Early Years). We will be sensitive to the needs and age of the children when grouping – we know how important it is for them to see their friends. Pupils will work with the same staff across the week and groups will not mix with each other, share resources, or use shared areas – in effect keeping them in the same social ‘work group’. You may see this on social media or in the news as a ‘bubble’. Although they may not be working in their normal classroom or with their normal teacher, their own class teacher will keep an overview on progress and activities and staff are planning jointly for the provision in the groups.
* **School lunches** – For children any child on Free School Meals we will continue to send vouchers to families and therefore these children will need to bring their own packed lunch purchased from the voucher money. Children in Reception and Year 1 who are not Free School Meals will receive a school packed lunch. Children in Year 6 will all need to bring their own packed lunch. Lunchtime staff will be allocated to each of the groups. Lunches will be eaten in their designated classroom space. At their own individual table.
* **Resources** – children will have their own resources in each class – there will be no need to share other group’s resources across lessons or a day, and any resources that do move between groups (e.g. iPad) will be cleaned before this happens
* **Organised rotas** – there will be rotas in place for use of playground, IT suite, lunches etc, so that children do not need to mix with other groups
* **Playground** – being outside is important for breaks, wellbeing and learning – we will mange this so that children will have plenty of space to play with the friends in their group and will have their own resources where needed. As the weather improves, please provide a sun hat and sun cream. Sun cream can be applied before school and staff will not be able to apply this to children so please ensure your child is independent enough to do this.
* **Exits and entrances into classes** – each group will use a different entrance/exit, so these areas are managed safely. This information will be sent directly to the necessary year groups next week.
* **First aid/changing/wellbeing** – please be assured that if there is any need to support children who require first aid, etc that staff will do this as normal. The only additional measure staff will take for first aid purposes is the use of disposable gloves (as normal practice) and a disposable mask (to protect your child). Please note masks WILL NOT be worn by staff undertaking day to day activities in school, nor by children. Further PPE such as full face masks may be worn for other intimate care needs.
* **Limited/no movement around school –** children will not be asked to move around school to mix with others – this reduces the risk for them all, and for staff in school. Any shared areas will be timetabled to avoid this.
* **Medicines and inhalers –** please ensure your child has an up to date inhaler in school if they need one, which can be left in school. Any medical needs can be discussed with staff and our procedures for administration of medication remain the same – please email the main office about this and update medical information if required.
* **Ventilation –** all windows will be kept open to allow air flow through school and ventilation to all areas. Internal doors will be kept open to minimise the risk of touching door handles.
* **Breakfast club and After School Care –** because we must minimise contact between groups now, this will not be offered across school at present.
* **If anyone becomes ill –** we have systems in place to isolate any children who are unwell. They will be seated away from other children and looked after in a well-ventilated area until a parent can collect them. We advise immediate testing and isolation for family. As a family you must ring 111 and inform us of the outcome. We advise all children displaying symptoms should be tested and cannot return to school until the test result is returned. For children in Nursery (under 5’s) who do not yet have tests available parents must contact 111 and seek more guidance- information released in last night’s briefing suggested that testing for under 5’s will be available but this is not the same as what we are being told.
* **Risk assessments –** thorough risk assessments are in place, devised by the local authority and school, and checked by Governors. These are reviewed weekly and cover all aspects of this planning.

I hope the information in this letter has reassured you about the measures we have taken, in line with DFE guidance, to reduce and manage the risks and organise for the staggered return of the children.

We know there are some changes made to the way we normally work, but please be assured the things at the heart of our school – the children’s happiness, learning, welfare and wellbeing – remain our first priority and we know when they come back to school they will adapt quickly to the new routines. Thank you for your support and understanding about these changes and arrangements. Please do not hesitate to contact school if you have any queries or concerns.

We are really looking forward to seeing the children again and firing up their enthusiasm for learning. Given the extended delay in returning we are considering what other movie creations we can make to allow us to keep in touch with the children- watch this space!

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs J Bromley