

Tuesday 19th May 2020

Update planning for reopening from 8th June

Dear Parents & Carers,

I promised to update you as soon as we had any further planning news on a return to school from June 8th. I know that there is a considerable amount of anxiety linked to the reopening of schools, and that came through strongly in the survey that we undertook with the parents of children in Years R, 1 and 6 last week. Thank you for your responses: this has helped us to plan for your children's return to school in Term 6

The latest guidance in relation to how schools should plan to reopen, as we shared before is below. Reading it will give you an insight as to how schools could open, should they do so from June 8th :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools>

Alongside this, schools have been provided with numerous guidance documents, which is informing our practice and our planning on a daily basis.

It is clear from the guidance provided that it is for schools in their local context to decide how to open. I met with local Headteachers from the Coastal Alliance group of schools yesterday, in order that we are taking a consistent approach towards the reopening of our local schools. However, all schools face slightly different challenges with buildings and staffing so not all of our approaches will be exactly the same in practice. The bullet pointed notes below are to assist you in understanding our current position and will help you understand what the next few weeks might look like.

Will our school open on June 8th ?

- We do not know if the Prime Minister and his scientific advisers will reduce the national risk level from 4 to 3, so that the nation enters stage 2 of recovery which includes the reopening of schools. This must happen in order for this date to be met. We have been told that a decision will be made on 28th May.
- As a school we are working tirelessly to ensure that our school is ready to reopen regardless of the wider national and local debate, when it is deemed safe to do so. We do not see the needs of children, staff and parents as 'competing'. All groups working on this matter are trying to ensure schools are as safe as possible for everyone when they reopen. If we open, it will be from June 8th.

How will we organise our school?.

- Children will return to 'bubbles' of no more than 15 pupils. This is to reduce risk and mixing. (For example, if our 68 Year 6 pupils return, 5 classes will be required and they will not mix). Many children therefore will not be taught by their own teacher, although they will oversee planning as part of the year group hub working. They will be in year group bubble classes but not necessarily from their current class. We will try

and consider friendships when planning the initial class bubbles, but as more children return, bubbles will need to stay intact and cannot be rearranged to accommodate friendship groupings.

- Social distancing will be encouraged. However, it is widely acknowledged that this will be very challenging for young pupils. We have found this already with our Key Worker pupils who have been attending since lockdown. The regime imposed will need to balance the risk with pupil welfare. The government guidance says this: *We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account.*
- Children will be mixing exclusively within their bubble throughout the day. This will mean staggered break and lunchtimes so that groups are unable to mix. The field/playground will be zoned when more than one group is outside. We will not be drawing circles with a 2m square diameter on the playground for children to stay within, as has been reported in some papers.
- PPE is not required in most circumstances in schools. It is not advised to be used by the government for adults or children in schools. PPE may be used if a child is symptomatic or if close intimate care is needed for a child.
- Detailed risk assessments have been written and shared with governors and these will be signed off and agreed, when the government give further details on a return date and our arrangements are finalised, before staff and children return.

Decisions Made

- Our school is preparing to open from June 8th, if it is safe to do so. Prior to this, staff will undertake crucial health and safety training in relation to the new guidance, risk assessments and routines.
- All Coastal Alliance schools with Junior age pupils are planning to admit Year 6 pupils first in week one, Reception children will also return in week one, (provisionally on Wednesday 10th June) with Year 1 children being considered for entry the following week, from June 15th if capacity allows. This will enable us to start with the youngest and oldest pupils. It will also allow us to learn from week one, so that schools are safer as more pupils attend. **All pupils will be collected at lunchtime by 1pm on Friday**, when school will shut early so the site can be cleaned thoroughly and prepared for the following week as numbers increase. This will be consistent across the Coastal Alliance schools and appears to be an approach many schools are taking across Kent, supported by the Local Authority.
- Digital registers will open Monday every week and will close on Thursday at 12pm. Only children registered 00by the previous Thursday will be considered for entry the following week. **There will be no midweek additions to class bubbles under any circumstances as numbers and staffing will need to be carefully considered**, and as the start of every week will include the teaching of social distancing principles.
- The kitchen will supply a cooked meal to those children who will require one. Children in Reception and Year 1 will be entitled to their universal free school meal. These will be eaten separately from those children who have packed lunches, who will eat their lunch with their class bubble, either outside in their designated zone or inside in their classroom, should the weather be poor. Groups will be strictly seated in their bubbles in the dinner hall and will not be able to get up and move around freely, to avoid cross mixing with others. There will be no queuing for the servery.
- There will be no breakfast or after school clubs for now as children booked into these would be mixing outside of class bubbles. If guidance around this changes, we will inform you immediately.
- Children attending will be eased back into curriculum for their year group, focusing on English and Maths. Curriculum needs will be balanced with the welfare of all being our top priority. As much time outside will be planned into the day.
- Key Worker children will continue to be taught in their own mixed age group bubble as currently, but children will be integrated into their chronological year group if they have returned.
- Children will wear uniform but footwear is flexible and we advise trainers, as will not be getting changed for any PE lessons. If the weather is hot, we'd advise shorts to be worn for the same reason. If you have any

problems maintaining uniform because you cannot replace it, we will be compassionate and flexible, we certainly do not expect Year 6 parents to buy new uniform!

- For year groups unable to attend, we will continue with home learning and the format of this will change slightly to mirror the work happening in school. Where many staff are returning to teaching full time each day with their new bubble class and are unable to spend time online supporting through Dojo, we will focus on the year groups who have not returned to school and mirror the work happening in the classroom for the others. The new class bubbles are going to take a lot of teachers to run so please bear with us with this as we get used to the new systems.

Actions for Parents

1. **Once the government make their decision on a date for return to school (expected to be 28th May) we will contact all parents of children in Years R,1 and 6 to ask if you will or won't be sending your child back to school on the given date of return. This will enable us to, over the half term holiday organise the class bubbles and the classrooms ready for the return to school.** If you subsequently change your mind and wish your child to return to school you must inform us **by 12pm each Thursday**, so that we can arrange new class bubbles to be set up or integrate children into current bubbles, where space exists.
2. Could all parents reinforce with their children the principles of social distancing and also how to wash hands properly. Before school broke up, we watched lots of children squirt soap onto their hands and then rinse it straight off under a tap before lathering it, so they effectively rinsed their hands for 20 seconds in water rather than washing them.
3. I have attached an appendix to our current school behaviour policy. Please read this with your child. Teachers will also revisit this with pupils at the start of each week.

All the Coastal Alliance group of schools are closed on Monday 25th May, Bank Holiday Monday.

School is open for Key Worker pupils in the first week of half term.

Due to a lack of need for childcare for Key Worker children in the second week of half term, we will be working as part of a hub at Joy Lane School where provision is needed.

Finally, I hope this information is useful – I apologise for the length of this e mail, but there is a lot to consider before the school does reopen.

Further information, such as on staggered arrival times, staggered end times for pick up and parental expectations on the school site linked to social distancing will follow as we get decisions made nationally and locally. I will write to you again as soon as I can: I am sure that you can appreciate that as we are planning in an ever-changing environment, there is much that could change.

However, I know parents always appreciate an early indication of information in order to plan. I am meeting local Headteachers again on Wednesday and I am in constant contact with our school governors. Each parent will be free to make their own decision about sending your child to school based on what is best for your family. We will support you whatever decision you make. The government have indicated that parents will not be fined in Term 6 if they do not send their children into school. We respectfully request that parents do not use social media platforms, (including Facebook or Whats App groups) to comment on the decision's others are making or the plans the school is making to return. This can add greatly to the anxiety of what is already a challenging time for many.



As I said before, I will write to you early next week with more specific details of bubble planning and staggered entry/pick up. Hopefully though, this has given you an indication of what to expect going forward, to help your decision making and planning.

Please stay safe, take care and stay alert in the meantime, and do not hesitate to contact us via Dojo or via the school office in the meantime, should you have any further questions

Yours Sincerely



Mrs Jenny Ashley-Jones
Executive Head Teacher

