

Further opening for children in Years 6, 1 and Reception Update

21st May 2020

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your responses to my letter of 14th May.

The situation remains fluid: the Government is due to announce on 28th May whether the scientific evidence indicates that it is safe for children to begin returning to school next month. Over the past week, I have continued to work closely with staff to refine the initial plan set out in my previous letter. I have also been consulting our own Governing Body and other Headteachers.

We really want to welcome all our children back to school as soon as possible, and recognise that it is the best setting in which to learn and develop. We also want to ease the burden on parents who have been juggling work commitments with home-schooling. The safety of children and staff is, nevertheless, the primary consideration.

A revised (although still provisional) plan is set out below. This is, of course, subject to whatever the Government announces on 28th May and any further guidance which is issued. The plan would also have to be reviewed weekly, taking account of changing circumstances in the school and more widely.

I have received requests for over 100 children to return to school from 1st June. Unfortunately, we are not able to accommodate that number of children whilst also maintaining adequate social distancing and other safety measures. We shall also have to maintain our existing provision for children of key workers, the number of whom is due to increase. The size and layout of classrooms and the number of our available staff are, of course, severe constraints on what is feasible. With the agreement of the Governing Body, however, I am proposing a phased reopening of school from 8th June: Year 6 children would return on that date, followed by Year 1 as soon as possible.

At this stage, we cannot set a date for the safe return of Reception children. We fully recognise that this will be a disappointment to many families who were looking forward to an earlier return for their children. This is unfortunately unavoidable due to space and staffing constraints. We are actively working towards being able to welcome all the Reception children back to a safe school environment, as soon as we possibly can.

The reasons for this phased approach are that:

- (i) we shall need time to consider the Government's announcement on 28th May and the further guidance that is expected, before welcoming back any of the eligible children. To begin the phased return on 1st June would simply be too rushed to be safe;
- (ii) given the restrictions on the numbers of pupils that can be accommodated within the social-distancing and other safety measures, we believe it sensible to begin with the cohort, Year 6, who are best equipped to understand and adhere to those measures. We can then review the measures (and any scope for relaxing them) before Year 1 children are welcomed back. Subsequent reviews will enable us to assess with greater assurance how we can accommodate more children, particularly those in Reception for whom social distancing will be most challenging; and
- (iii) returning to school under any of the restrictions currently envisaged will be a very different experience for all the children from what they have been used to. The phased approach I am proposing will enable us to manage and minimise the anxieties and concerns they are likely to have.

The following table illustrates how the phased return would be organised. Returning children would be expected to return to school on a full-time basis from Monday to Thursday only. School opening and pick-

up times, however, would be staggered to ensure that separate groups of children are segregated from each other. (The basis on which groups would be formed is explained below.)

School would not be open on Fridays, except for children of key workers. This is necessary for deep cleaning of the premises and to provide teachers with time to continue to plan, monitor and support home-learning for those not returning to school. Staff would also review how effectively the arrangements in place were working and discuss how to implement any appropriate changes (including relaxation of certain measures) for the following week.

Provisional plan for school opening in June (subject to review and amendment each week)			
Week beginning	Year Groups		
Week 1 Monday 1 st June	Only open for school staff (and children of key workers) to ensure all health and safety measures are in place for children's return.		
Week 2 (Monday to Thursday) Monday 8 th June	Year 6		
Week 3 (Monday to Thursday) Monday 15 th June	Year 6	Year 1 – start date to be confirmed in light of the experience the previous week	
Week 4 (Monday to Thursday) Monday 22 nd June	Year 6	Year 1	Begin review of Reception (and other classes) returning

If your child is in Years **Reception, Years 2, 3, 4 or 5**, they should **remain at home** until further notice. Home-learning will continue for your children and work will continue to be posted on the school website, but staff may have less time to engage with Class Dojo while they are teaching in school.

Safety Measures

On the basis of our latest risk assessments and the current DfE advice, we are planning the following measures.

In the Classroom

- Reduce class sizes to ensure children can be seated two metres apart, which means a maximum of between six and nine in any one classroom (depending on its size and whether the group contains twins – who can sit together). This means at least three quarters of a year group would not therefore, be taught by their usual class teacher or teaching assistant.
- Each group would be segregated from other staff and children throughout the day.
- Within classrooms, each child would sit in the same seat at all times and be given their own equipment and stationery to use.
- All classroom equipment used would be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each day.
- Each class would have its own supply of disinfectant and all surfaces would be cleaned regularly throughout the day.

Movement Around School

- Movement around school would be limited and timetabling would ensure only one group would access one area of outdoor space at any one time.
- Each group would be allocated an outdoor learning space and encouraged to use this for both play and outdoor learning.
- Two adults would be assigned to each group so that an adult can escort children wishing to use the toilet and ensure no contact with staff or children from other groups.
- The children would be taught and supervised by those two adults only throughout the school day.

Lunchtime

- Each group would have an allocated time for outdoor play, which would be supervised to ensure children stay apart as far as possible and play safely.
- Children who select a school lunch would be provided with a packed lunch, delivered to their classroom. Children would be able to bring their own packed lunch into school.
- All lunches would be eaten at the child's individual desk in the classroom.
- Children must all bring their own water bottle to school each day, clearly labelled with their name.

In order to reinforce the social distancing that is central to our current safety measures, we would be very grateful for parents' co-operation in observing the following guidelines when taking children to and from school.

Drop-off

- Times would be allocated to the different small groups, so that they can arrive within five/ten-minute intervals of each other. Each child would be met at the front of the school and allocated a space in which to wait (two metres apart from others) until the whole group has arrived. Please make every effort to adhere to the allocated time. If you are late and arrive after your allocated time, your child might not be allowed to attend school that day.
- Only one parent should drop their child off at school. Please make every effort to avoid bringing any siblings with you, to minimise the number of people gathering at the school gate.
- No child would be able to enter the school grounds before being admitted by a member of staff. Parents would be required to wait outside the school gate.
- On entering the school building, children would immediately wash their hands with soap for twenty seconds.
- Parents walking to school with their children should ensure that social distancing is strictly observed during their journey.
- The School Street restrictions would be in place, so no vehicles would be allowed into Cannon Road between 8.15am and 9.15am.

Pick-up

- Under School Street restrictions, no vehicles would be allowed into Cannon Road between 2.45pm and 4.15pm.
- Each group would be allocated a collection time. We currently plan that some Year 6 groups would be collected from the gate of the parish centre car park and others from the area outside the office; Year 1 groups would be collected from the gate nearest the Site Manager's House.
- Parents would be required to wait outside the gate until a member of staff escorts their child to them, and then leave immediately to limit the numbers of parents waiting and to facilitate social distancing.

Additional matters

- Make sure that all children attending school have a thorough wash each day and that they come to school in fresh, clean clothes. To support this, wearing of school uniform will be optional.
- **If anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid-19, you must not bring your child to school and he/she must self-isolate for 14 days. You must also let the school know so that others can be tested, if required.**

If the Government confirms next Thursday that schools can begin welcoming children back, I shall write in the first instance to Year 6 parents to confirm how many would like to send their child back on 8th June. After the Year 6 children have returned, I will write to the parents of Year 1 children to confirm arrangements for them.

Clearly this is a very difficult time for everyone. I hope this letter has reassured you that we are taking all possible measures to ensure the school is as safe as possible for the children and staff to return next month. We ask you to bear in mind, however, that we are working with children who may not be able to follow all the new safety requirements all the time: there may be occasions when children will breach social distancing, touch other children's equipment or try to cuddle staff. Please talk to your children about what would be expected of them. If you think your child may struggle to adapt to all the new requirements, you may wish to consider whether it would be preferable for them to continue with home-learning for the time being.

Please note that attendance will not be compulsory under current circumstances and parents will not be fined if they choose to keep their children at home.

We all regret that we cannot welcome back more children at this stage – and recognise the continuing pressures families are under. We really hope that it will not be too long before we can begin to plan for the return of all our children to school life in a form that resembles what we had two months ago, although we must be prepared for some restrictions to remain for some time to come. At all stages, however, we shall make the safety of children and staff our priority. I hope we can count on your continuing understanding, support and co-operation (for which all the staff and I are most grateful) as we move forward on that basis.

If you have any questions, please email office@st-monicas.enfield.sch.uk and we shall get back to you. I shall, of course, continue to keep you informed of new developments.

Kind regards

Kate Baptiste
Headteacher