



18 May 2020

Dear Parents/carers,

As you will have heard in the news, schools have been asked to begin planning for a phased return from 1st June, at the earliest. Government guidance states that:

“We will only do this provided that the five key tests set out by government justify the changes at the time, including the rate of infection is decreasing...”

This letter is to provide all of our families with our first, initial plans for a return to school, although we will provide more information to the relevant families as further guidance is provided. Our main priority is to maintain the safety of our children and our staff whenever they are in school, so we will not be returning to ‘normal’.

Hopefully you will see what our draft plans are, through the questions and answers below:

Why are schools reopening?

- ✓ It is good for children to socialise with others
- ✓ It supports their well-being
- ✓ It is the best place for children to learn

Which children can return?

- ✓ Childcare will still be provided for vulnerable children, and children of critical workers
- ✓ Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 can come to school
- ? Nursery children may be invited to attend for allocated sessions if we have the space and staff to do so. We will be working with Hazel Dene Childcare to try and make this possible
- ✗ Any children (new 3 year olds) due to start Nursery will now not start until the autumn term
- ✗ Children in Years 2 – 5 will have to stay at home, even if they have brothers and sisters in the groups returning

How will the school be made safe?

- ✓ We will risk assess our routines and systems before 1st June
- ✓ There will be fewer children grouped together
- ✓ Everyone will wash hands regularly, and use the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ strategy
- ✓ School will be cleaned more regularly and thoroughly

What changes are being made?

- ① Children will be split into smaller groups of 6-8 children, and taught in separate spaces where possible. *These new ‘family groups’ will remain together with their adult for the days they are in school, and will not be able to mix with others.* In the Early Years, this will be more difficult, but we will be trying to maintain this for the safety of all concerned
- ① Children may not be in their usual classroom, or with their usual teacher
- ① Our normal timetable, and normal lessons may not always happen
- ① The timing of your child’s school day may be altered
- ① Pick up and drop off times will be different for each group
- ① Changes to lunchtime arrangements will be made
- ① There will be no Breakfast club or after-school club provision

Does my child have to attend?

- ✓ If they are in the groups listed above they are welcome back to school
- ✗ Parents will not be fined if children do not attend – we understand this might be a choice you want to make at present

We hope that you will talk to your children about this 'return to school' plan so that they are a bit better prepared when they arrive. We will try to keep social distancing in place where we can and we hope that you can help explain this to them, and that things may be a bit different.

We will also expect parents to take responsibility for their own social distancing actions when dropping off and picking up – we will try to provide guidance about this around the school entrance, but please be aware that parents will not be allowed into the school unless there are extreme circumstances. We hope that you understand that this is for the health and safety of children, staff and yourselves.

What if there are Coronavirus symptoms in school?

- If your child shows symptoms, you will be asked to collect them (and any brothers or sisters) from school
- Any child or adult showing symptoms must self-isolate for 7 days
- The people that live with this person must self-isolate at home for 14 days
- Staff and children (and their households) will have access to testing, and should be tested if they display symptoms:
 - **If the test result is negative**, they can return to school and the household can end its isolation
 - **If the test is positive**, the rest of the class or group within school will be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days
 - In this case, the remainder of the household do not need to self-isolate, unless the class/group member develops symptoms

Next steps...

We will be contacting parents of children in Reception, Years 1 and 6 very soon, and Mrs Garside will be in touch with Nursery parents.

We want to make sure we understand your feelings about this return to school plan, and how you feel about your child's return, so when we call, please be honest with us.

Remember that individual group sizes will be decided once we have an idea of numbers of children, but we will also be providing further specific information about drop off and pick up times, as well as other information about the school day to those parents who need it nearer the time.

Please bear in mind that, should the Government continue its plan to return all children to school before the summer, our plans will have to change. We are following current guidelines and doing what we think will work best, but the goalposts do keep changing.

As always, we thank you for your kind words during your phone calls, and hope that you are all still #staying safe. We are on 01429 836376 or hesleden@durhamlearning.net if you need to get in touch.

Thank you in advance for your support during this incredibly unusual and challenging time.

Mrs Dunn