



16<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **COVID:19 Update : Response to Proposed School Reopening**

Dear Parent / Carer.

I hope this letter finds you all well. I am pleased to say that everyone at school has remained healthy and have been able to continue to work hard during lockdown to provide support for children and families in school, and also the wider community through our distance learning activities. I know you will join me in thanking them for their positivity, professionalism and enthusiasm throughout this time.

As I am sure you will be aware, Primary schools have been instructed to open Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from June 1st before, potentially, opening up for all year groups by the end of June. This has, understandably, been met with a mixed response with many concerns from various areas of society, including parents and carers, but rest assured we are working hard to ensure that we open school in a measured way, and in a way that minimises risk to pupils and staff.

With that in mind, I have risk assessed re-opening our Nursery provision, and after discussions with senior staff and consultation with our school governors, we have taken the decision that Nursery will not be re-opening to pupils on the 1<sup>st</sup> June in order to ensure that when we welcome our Nursery children back to school, we do so in as safe and secure way as possible. I feel that we need to monitor how the new systems work with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children in the first instance before extending our provision to the youngest pupils in our school. I do apologise for this decision but I'm sure you appreciate that my main priority has to be the safety and well-being of pupils and staff, and this change will allow us to reintroduce our pupils in the safest way possible. This decision will be reviewed weekly, and I would aim to update you on the situation regarding Nursery by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June at the latest.

Although plans have not been finalised, I feel it is only fair to let you know that it is also unlikely that Reception and Years 1 and 6 will all return on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. A more likely scenario would be for Year 6 to return initially on Monday 1st, with Year 1 and Reception starting Tuesday and Wednesday of that week respectively. This of course is subject to ongoing discussions between school leaders, local authority representatives, and trade unions, and I will let

you know the definitive plans as soon as they are in place. This small change will again help us as a school to make your child's return to school as relaxed and stress free as possible.

We are working closely with the Local Authority to identify what we can do to follow national expectations in order to manage the many complexities of returning greater numbers of pupils safely whilst also supporting others who remain at home. Please find alongside this letter correspondence from Caroline O'Neill, the Head of Children's Services for Gateshead to all parents across the borough which spells out the collective position of the local authority on this issue.

From a school point of view, we will do all we can to reduce the risk of virus transmission by changing routines and systems as well as reducing pupil numbers and limiting who they come into contact with, but what we can't do in school is create the same robust social distancing environment that can be followed by adults. The government knows this and that is why schools are not expected to make themselves 'COVID Secure' as other work environments must.

To attempt to reduce risk for staff and higher numbers of children who return to school before the summer, the organisation of the school will be slightly different. These changes could include some or all of the following:

- It may be the case that children may not be with their current class teacher and will not be with their entire class. To support social distancing measures, we will aim for class sizes of 10 with a cap of no more than 15 in any one classroom.
- The children will work and play with this group of pupils for the entire school day. No mixing will be allowed between groups, even at break times, to reduce the risk of infection.
- Our aim will be to only allow one child to visit the toilet at any one time, and to try and encourage the children to use the toilets at specified times to avoid the risk of unplanned contact in corridors.
- We will aim to have children sitting two metres apart wherever possible to follow social distancing measures.
- Classrooms will have all soft furnishings removed, and will have some resources removed to make cleaning easier.

- To minimise the movement of teachers between teaching groups, it may be necessary to close school early one day per week to allow teachers the opportunity to plan and prepare.
- We would like all children to come to school in uniform, and where possible that should be laundered daily.
- For those year groups who use them, school will provide all pupils with their own resource bag with pencil, pen, ruler, rubber etc. This is for their sole use and should not be shared. If children wish to use coloured pencils in their work they would be encouraged to bring their own, but again, only for their own personal use.
- When any more general school equipment is used, such as IT hardware or science equipment, it will be thoroughly cleaned before other children use or touch it.
- Hand sanitiser will be available in all classrooms and children will be encouraged to use it when required. This will be used in conjunction with frequent handwashing to maintain high levels of personal hygiene.
- There will be new drop off routines established by school. This will involve social distancing and designated drop off and pick up times, often staggered away from the usual times to avoid congestion. Times for drop off and collection, as well as drop off points will be communicated when we have a better idea of pupil numbers.
- Children will eat packed lunches in their classroom, either provided by school or brought from home. Unfortunately we will be unable to provide a hot lunch in school at the moment. Playtimes and breaks will again be staggered, and there will be an increased focus on outdoor learning across the week.
- Although we appreciate that parents need to return to work, we will need, as ever, a contact to be available just in case they are required to collect children from school.

The above points are very much an outline of the types of steps we will need to take in school to make the environment as safe as possible, but to move to the next stage and look at implementation, we do need to know what your

intentions are as parents. Therefore, could I please ask that you complete the Microsoft Forms questionnaire on the link below as soon as possible indicating your intentions with regards to sending your children back to school. Please just indicate yes or no next to the year group your child is in and ignore all other boxes. (This link is also available in the links and downloads section on the homepage of the school website.)

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=XMjm2NWJhEix6G2clRZorAm1EvWCed1Apnekui-zpJm1UMjc2OEpGRE5IVDE1NFBSRDNNQkVMVEJSUC4u>

Once we have the results of the survey we should be able to move forward and offer you all some more clarity on what the 1<sup>st</sup> June and beyond should look like.

If you have any questions in the meantime about the expansion of school numbers, could you please email them to [admin@kibblesworthacademy.org.uk](mailto:admin@kibblesworthacademy.org.uk) The intention is to collate the questions and answer them collectively next week. Any specific concerns or questions will of course be answered individually.

Finally, can I just reiterate that as a school, our paramount responsibility is to create a safe environment for all of our children and staff, and to do this in a way which still makes school a positive experience for everyone involved. It will be different, but it will be good to see the children again and start to work towards some level of normality – something that we all crave at the moment.

Thank you and best wishes,

Craig Steel

Head Teacher