



12th May 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers

As you will all be well aware the Government has now set out a plan for the phased re-opening of schools. In many ways we, as a school, embrace this opportunity to welcome our children and staff back into the building however, the situation still has to be managed very carefully – as the Government says we have to - **Stay alert, Control the virus** – to ensure that we do this we have to risk assess each individual situation and follow the guidance to put in as many safety measures as possible to keep all of our children and staff safe. All of the statements below have been made taking into consideration the present situation and may change if the government change their guidance.

The situation in school so far is that we have been open to children of key workers and we have been supporting the children whose parents are working on the frontline with people who have COVID-19 every day. We will continue to support these families.

To ensure clarity of the situation the best thing we can do is state the facts as they are:

- We are planning a phased return for pupils who are well enough and whose parents are happy for them to attend school from 1st June 2020.
- Our school offer will remain unchanged until this date.
- As a Special School we are not restricted to offering this to only specific year groups, the more important factor is the risk to the individual child and decisions about returning will be based around risk rather than year group.
- This may be on a part time/ rota basis because we need to socially distance where possible and to have all pupils in school at once will not be safe.
- We will need to stagger start and finish times to ensure we don't have a bottleneck of pupils and staff coming into the school and so that we can ensure we follow hygiene guidance for everyone as they enter and exit the building.
- We will not have a full staffing ratio (including enteral feeders and personal care) as some staff are shielding (until the end of July), some are ill and some are grieving and unable to return to work just yet.
- We cannot guarantee there will be a full nursing team or continuing care team on site as these teams are employed by the NHS.

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- We cannot guarantee that every child will be in their normal class group with their regular staff team.
- For many of our children social distancing will be impossible due to their need for personal care and their limited understanding.
- We do not have any additional PPE. We use gloves and aprons when attending to personal needs and the government has said we need no additional PPE.
- We will employ a stringent cleaning program in school which is additional to our normal regime based on recommendation from PHE and BICS.
- As yet we have no guarantee from the LA that they can ensure that transport providers are cleaning their buses and taxis to meet recommended hygiene standards. We have not received any guidance on how transport operatives are going to maintain social distancing within their vehicles.
- Taxi and minibus drivers who undertake school runs also transport members of the public during the day and in the evenings.
- If children cannot be transported to school safely we may not be able to accept them as this also puts others at risk.
- Should there be a positive case of COVID-19 within the school then all people and their families who have been in the vicinity of that person will have to self-isolate for 14 days.

Together we have to be sensible about our approach and support each other going forward. As you are probably well aware if your child has a shielding letter they will not be attending school for the specified 12 week period. As per the guidance if your child has a respiratory condition or a compromised immune system then you need to seek medical advice and be sure it is safe for them to return to a situation where stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to. Also if your child or any member of your family is showing symptoms of COVID-19 you must keep them at home and self-isolate until the end of the 14 day period or the child/ family member has been tested and received a negative test result.

We are working very hard to plan the phased return in the best way possible to support the well-being and safety of all of the children. It will take us a some time to pull this together and also the LA have indicated that they want to be part of the process. We will be contacting you in the next few days to ascertain your perspective regarding your child and what would be best for them going forward. In the first instance could you please complete the Google Form which we will send to you via text or follow this link (<https://forms.gle/eWysys5T8L5rauSK7>). We would appreciate a response to this by Thursday 14th May.



We have had many phone calls today from parents who are concerned that the government are moving too quickly and have asked if it will be OK for them to keep their child at home for the foreseeable future. I would just like to reassure you that this is fine – you know your child and their needs best and if you feel it is still safer to keep your child at home then we will support this. It is still a very scary time and I completely understand anxieties of parents sending vulnerable children who cannot social distance into a large group situation with others who cannot social distance. If you choose to keep your child at home in the first instance please be reassured that we can review this at any point should you wish.

Every case will be treated on an individual basis and we will try our very best, in accordance with Government guidance, to ensure every child for whom it is safe, has some access to school with the consent of their parent/carer before the Summer break. We will continue to keep you informed of our plans as we put them in place.

We know that you understand how difficult this is going forward and, as ever, we appreciate your support. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

With Very Best Wishes,

Melsa Buxton
Executive Principal

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