



Monday 18th May, 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Hello! I hope that you all had a lovely weekend, and are feeling well.

Schools received a lot of changing guidance from the Department for Education and Local Authority last week regarding the wider re-opening of schools. I'm sure that you will have seen that this has caused quite a lot of controversy and that there has been increasing media coverage about the concerns of parents, carers, teachers, school leaders and trade unions about how, and when, this can safely be achieved.

Preparing for the wider re-opening of school

As you are aware, as part of national social distancing measures to limit the spread of coronavirus, the government had to limit the numbers of children and young people attending educational and childcare settings, to ensure that pupils and staff attending could do so safely. That is why, since 23 March, education and childcare settings have only been open to the children of essential workers and vulnerable children.

As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased. The government therefore anticipates, with further progress, that they *may be able*, from the week commencing 1 June, to welcome back more children to early years, school and further education settings.

This will only happen provided that the five key tests set by the government justify the changes at the time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing. As a result, the government is asking schools to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that these tests are met.

At Sydenham and Lighthorne Heath Primary Schools, senior leaders and school governors are working with the Local Authority and other school leaders in the South Leamington Consortium to begin to make plans for a cautious and safe re-opening, *when it is deemed safe by the government*, which will be 1st June *at the earliest*.

We are currently completing extensive, in-depth risk assessments to plan for our cautious wider re-opening. We are seeking to put in place measures that will reduce the risks of transmission of covid-19 within school as far as possible. The overarching principle in all our planning is the safety and well-being of children, families and staff.

Which pupils will be able to attend school?

From the week beginning 1st June at the earliest, the government is asking nurseries and primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, alongside the children of essential workers and vulnerable children.

What protective measures are being implemented?

In order to achieve a wider return to school, we have been asked to split children into groups of no more than 15 children. The government is referring to these groups as 'protective bubbles' where the children do not have contact with any other pupils or adults in school. This will mean that not all children will be able to be taught in their own classroom or by their usual class teacher. Half of the children from each class will be taught by other familiar teaching staff from within the school.

We have been asked to ensure minimum contact between children arriving at the beginning of the school day and leaving school at home-time, which means that we will need to stagger arrival times and end of day collection times. We also need to stagger lunchtimes and playtimes to help ensure that groups of children don't come into contact with each other.

To minimise potential transmission the children will need to use anti-bacterial hand gel as they arrive and as they leave (this is currently on order). They will also be guided by staff to wash their hands very regularly throughout the school day. The older children will also help keep their desk surface and equipment clean using anti-bacterial wipes throughout the day.

Part of maintaining a lower risk environment is reducing movement around the building, so lunches will be delivered to and eaten in the classroom bubbles and we will have to maintain a 'one in one out' process for using the toilets. We are introducing a one-way system around the school building, and marking out social distances, as far as possible.

We are currently re-organising classroom furniture and making adjustments to the school site so that we are ready to welcome children back when the government tells us it's time to do so. Schools have not yet been informed when exactly we will be notified whether or not we can begin wider-reopening on 1st June – this may only be communicated to us last minute. **We will do everything we can to keep you informed with current DfE information, and will send you more detailed planning later this week.**

We appreciate that this is an anxious time for many parents and carers – some of you will be very keen for the children to be back at school, whilst other families may be feeling very worried and wider re-opening. We will continue to work in partnership with you and try to address any concerns that you may have. We've missed the children so much, and look forward to welcoming them back as soon as it's safe to do so.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, Mrs Birch (at Lighthorne Heath) or Miss Glenny (at Sydenham), if you have any queries before we outline more detailed plans later this week.



Best wishes,

Juliette Westwood

Executive Head Teacher

