



Cottesmore St. Mary Catholic Primary School

THE DIOCESE OF ARUNDEL AND BRIGHTON



Headteacher: Rachel Breen B.A. Hons.

15th May 2020

Dear parents / carers

I hope you are well. Over the last few days, we have worked tirelessly on what, we believe, is a very comprehensive plan for the proposed reopening of schools. I am currently in discussions with staff regarding this proposal as I want to ensure that we have a shared agreement. It is important to me that staff have time to digest, further question and potentially alter what we are suggesting since they will be the ones delivering our proposals. Similarly, I appreciate that you need time to also digest what is being offered. With this in mind, please note that this is our proposal but that, as per any proposal at this time, elements may still be subject to change. Apologies for the length of this letter!

I also wanted to highlight the fact that whilst I recognise that many of you will not take up our proposed plan, it will be welcomed by others. Similarly, I'm aware that, whilst some families from Years 2 - 5 will be pleased that their children will still receive robust home learning, safe from home, others will be very disappointed that these children will not be returning at the same proposed time as those in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. I am sure your children have mixed views too. We will support you all.

As you know, the Prime Minister has indicated that the Government believes it may be in a position to implement a phased re-opening of schools, potentially from 1st June, starting with pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This is part of the Government's conditional plan which it says will remain under regular review. Trade Unions are still in talks with various Government departments and we are still waiting to hear if there is any further guidance or changes.

We have been told that any plan to increase the number of pupils in schools has to be practical, manageable, and robust from a risk assessment point of view in order to ensure the safety of all, as best we can. The safety of children, and staff, not to mention the wider community, must be at the centre of all that we do. The Local Authority has advised that schools only open as and when their risk assessment believes that it is safe to do, whilst also being influenced by the national picture regarding safety. It may be that schools decide to offer phased or staggered reopening in order to introduce children to the new way of school life – albeit temporary. We have been working to gain a better understanding of the details of the Government's plan. Amongst other documents, we have used the following to help guide us.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

I would recommend taking the time to read these documents as they may answer questions that you might have. You can also search for them via the Government website www.gov.uk

We will send further information in due course but, in the meantime, we wanted to give you a brief outline of what it is that we are proposing so that you can consider it accordingly. One main Government message is that, *in order to reduce transmissions risk, it is expected that children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group of no more than 15 children, and that protective measures around cleaning hands more often; cleaning frequently touched surfaces and minimising contact by altering class layouts and staggered breaks are implemented.*

Class organisation

The current recommendation is that children mix in small, consistent groups (that we will be calling Hubs), no larger than 15. We have based our proposed plan on the potential of all Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 families taking up the Government option and have followed a Hub model for each year group. This way, we imagine that we can offer education to the identified year groups, potentially daily, whilst ensuring that they only mix with those in their Hub. That means that children, and staff, in each Hub should only come into contact with 15 children and 2 to 3 different adults - approximately 17 other households (providing those households fully follow the Government guidance when out of school).

We imagine that children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will each be split into 4 Hubs for their year group. This would be done randomly, and there would be no option of children moving Hub. As there would be 4 Hubs per year group, only 2 would be taught by their usual class teacher, the remaining 2 would be taught by a teacher from another year group. Their teacher would remain consistent from the date of opening until the end of the summer term, providing that member of staff remained well and able to attend work. If not taught by their usual class teacher, where possible, the children's usual TA would be with them. Children of key workers, in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5, who cannot

safely be looked after at home, along with vulnerable pupils and pupils with an EHCP (significant special educational needs) will be looked after in their own Hub. Please note that, as per current guidance, this will remain as childcare and not formal education as found in the other year groups.

If we receive a full take up of children, it is likely that we would run a staggered / phased induction period so that we could offer smaller groups the chance to come in and adapt to our new way of working, a bit like when they first started school. The whole school day would be very different so we would need time to train the children to ensure that they are fully aware of routines and able to social distance in the best way possible. If we had a reduced number take up, then we may be able to offer daily provision to all children from the first day of opening. We have to put safety at the forefront of all that we do.

Social distancing

As a school, we will do everything possible to help maintain any sense of social distancing. We will have 2 metre markings by all outside doors, within all corridors, toilets etc. Signage will be visible, reminding adults and children of what 2 metres looks like and that they should at all times, keep this space in between them and someone else. It is interesting that none of the documents above makes specific reference to guaranteed enforcement of social distancing per se. One assumes this is because they appreciate that it isn't as possible as one would hope with younger children, or children in general. In fact, from what I have seen, there are also a number of adults out there who also seem to struggle.

In order to support social distancing, as recommended, we will split each class into 15 children maximum and call this a Hub. In every year group, we have planned for children to be sat at individual tables that are 2 meters apart. Children will remain at these tables and receive their teaching from the front of the classroom. Teachers will only be able to work with individuals if it possible to maintain a 2 metre distance around them. Children will not be able to stand up and walk around their classroom without permission and, if so, only one at a time. In the younger years, this will be a very different way of working for the children as it contradicts the premise of Early Years practice which is free flow with self-selected use of practical resources. As none of this practice adheres to social distancing, not to mention the fact that it would be impossible to clean every item as and when it was touched, it will be very different for them. We have been advised to remove all soft furnishings and soft toy items from all spaces and remove the vast majority of equipment that won't be used. Rooms will look and feel different. Younger children will not have access to the role play area, sand, water etc as per usual. That said, we will ensure that the younger children have, under their table, some small world / construction activities, their own play dough, writing items, books, maths resources etc so, throughout the day, they will have access to some of the items that we believe they need in order for things to feel as normal as possible. Although, I think it's clear that things won't be normal and we want to be as transparent with you as possible.

Research has shown that, this Hub effect, and minimum shared spaces, may help minimise transmission spreading. If the virus comes into the building, the hope is that, those potentially infected should only be those from that Hub. This would mean that we would then close that Hub down and guide everyone to self-isolate. The remainder of the school could potentially continue. It is important that you note that complete social distancing cannot be totally guaranteed within Reception and Year 1. We will do all we can and will constantly remind the children and guide those who get up to return to their seat, but you know as parents, that this will be hard for children of this age, to manage this, consistently, for a full 6 hours, every day. Plus, the way this age group learns in school, isn't set up for children sat at isolated desks. This model is more possible in Year 6 but even then, children will no doubt forget and move towards each other during outdoor times. Again, we will ensure, when outside, that every child has their own space 2 metre space apart from others, and, should they drift, remind them to return. We are aware that the guidance of distancing will be hard for the children so we will work incredibly hard to make the whole experience as supportive, welcoming and positive for them as possible. I feel strongly that I must be clear on the matter of social distancing so that you don't send your child into school believing that we will guarantee something that we just can't. You know that, as a school, we always take matters very seriously and will do our absolute best to ensure this is followed as tightly as it can be but I also want to be open and honest. We are thorough and diligent in all that we do and you can rest assure that we will take this very, very seriously. I hope you know that you can always trust us to do our absolute best.

Cleaning

We will have designated cleaning at regular intervals throughout the day. Every class will have their own set of a range of anti-bacterial materials, sprays and gloves etc so that consistent, extra, sanitisation takes places, in order to prevent transmission, as best we can. At the end of each day, cleaners will carry out a deeper clean of every space used.

It is likely that play equipment will not be used outside at play or lunchtime as the rota slots are too swift for cleaning to take place. Any items used in the Reception outdoor area will be cleaned at the end of each session and before another group go outside. We will clean all classroom items at the end of the day.

Infection prevention and control

We will be encouraging children to clean their hands more often than usual and ensure that they wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly. As sanitisers in school have to be none alcohol based, soap is best and this should be made very clear to the children. Hand washing will take place, adult supervised, at least every hour. We will promote the 'Catch it, bin it kill it' approach to coughs and sneezes and all will be required to wash hands immediately after coughing or sneezing. We will encourage children not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose and windows will be open wherever possible. We will ensure toilets are not crowded and

that children only attend with adult supervision. No children will be permitted to walk around the school unsupervised. Corridors will have 2 metre floor markings that must be followed when walking, in a line, as a Hub.

Learning

When in school, we will provide an education for the children as per usual. We envisage that children will receive their usual morning learning eg Maths, Reading, Writing and Phonics / Spelling. As noted above, we will also encourage use of outdoor space as and when the rota system allows. We want PE lessons to take place, when possible, plus will allow for extra wellbeing lessons that may be needed. We will start teaching from where we left off in March and will work to fill any gaps / move on accordingly. Children will not have access to the Computing suite, Art room or Music room, nor receive specialist teaching as we need to reduce their mixing with other adults. Teachers will plan lessons as if it was a usual school term and guide with regards to next steps accordingly. Staff will make learning as engaging as usual and use many of the usual school systems. The main difference for children will be that they will be in smaller class Hubs and might not be with their usual class teacher. They won't be able to work in closely seated groups or use many, if any, practical resources. Of course the children will be with teachers who care for them and have their best interests at heart. Teachers will creatively plan lessons that engage, whilst work to help the children feel as comfortable as possible.

Children from Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 will continue to receive Home Learning Grids and liaise with a teacher via Seesaw. Children from Reception, Year 1 and 6, who do not come into school, will also receive work via Home Learning Grids as per usual. These children will receive some input via Seesaw but this may be reduced. This means that those, not attending, won't miss out as much as they might think as the Home Learning Grids will reflect what is happening in the classroom.

Lunches

Year groups will eat lunch at the same time, in their Hubs. No children will go to the hall and each Hub will eat in their classroom. School lunches will be provided for those wishing to order but only in the form of a packed lunch. Due to serving, timetabling and staffing logistics, we will not be able to offer hot lunches. If a family is struggling financially and relies on a hot school lunch, please contact Anna Mullans so that we can organise for food support for your family. We really do not want any child to ever go without. Children can of course bring in their own packed lunch from home.

Playtime and lunchtime

We have devised a potential plan, that means that, whilst each year group will have morning and lunch play at the same time, their Hubs will never cross over or mix. For example, all those attending school from Year 6 will each go to a different play area zone eg Hub 1 to the KS2 playground, Hub 2 to the KS1 playground, Hub 3 to the field and Hub 4 to the Forest School area. So, whilst they have break at the same time, their Hub of 15 will likely not see peers from another and they certainly won't be able to cross into the space of another. This will be the same for all year groups. When in their designated outdoor space, children will be expected to remain at 2 metre distances. We will use floor dots to show the children how to space out. Children can of course talk to one another from such distances and we will teach them activities that can be played when positioned in such a way. We will encourage children to complete on the spot exercises in order to remain active and we will look to see how items such a skipping ropes and balls could potentially be used in the future.

We will plan for children to be outside as much as possible. However, due to the nature of the timetable, which has to be done in such a way in order to avoid corridor cross over, it won't be too much more than usually takes place.

Drop off and pick up

Each year group will have their own drop off and pick up time. These will follow, but designated drop off times will be between 8.30am and 9.30am and pickups between 2.30pm and 3.15pm. Employers are required to be flexible in order to accommodate this. Only one adult will be permitted to accompany a child onto the playground, to their designated drop off point, and may be encouraged to leave them at the gate. Staff will not be able to stop and talk to you as we will have to ask adults to remain on the premises for the minimum amount of time possible. You can, of course, email teachers with any information needed in advance. We hope to open three, one way systems but will write more about this in our next correspondence. Please do not contact us as yet regarding times, we will be in touch as soon as we can. Floor markings and one way markings will be shown in all areas. Entrance times will need to be kept tight in order to avoid cross over. Any child arriving post their designated time, will need to be taken to the school office with their adult. Here you will be required to wait outside the office window, in 2 metre spacing, until an adult is available to collect them. We would hope that this would be swift but, please allow for up to 30 minutes as all adults will be utilised manning the extra gates plus supporting Hubs to walk through the building. At no time is a child permitted to walk alone in the corridor as we have a tight movement timetable in order to avoid Hubs crossover plus no parents are able to enter the building. We also ask that families do not arrive before their allocated slot as they too will not be able to enter the school site and will be required to wait outside of the school gates. What I'm trying to say is, please be prompt for your 15-minute window - your timekeeping skills will be vital. Similarly, this will all apply at the end of the day.

Gatherings

Children will not be able to gather in the hall therefore assemblies will not take place. I hope that I will be permitted to visit classes, and stand at the door, so that I can say hello to the all the different Hubs of children. Classes will provide their own morning worship. We have cancelled all planned school events between now and the end of term.

Uniform and belongings

We encourage children not to bring coats. Children are not able to bring in PE kits, book bags or rucksacks. PE lessons aim to take place and can be completed in school uniform and trainers worn to school. The least items brought into the building the better. Cloakrooms won't be in use. Children are required to bring in water bottles and wear smart school uniform as per school policy.

Clubs

Due to the Hub nature of our model, we will not be able to offer breakfast club or after school clubs as this would mean that children would mix with others from other Hubs. Families will need to talk to their employers to ensure that they are supportive, as per the Prime Minister's guidance, and allow flexibly for workers to drop off later and pick up earlier than before.

Wellbeing

Some children may struggle retuning to a structured school environment after so much time off. Obviously we will plan for this accordingly but we would hope that, should you decide to take up a school place, you start to discuss what to expect when in school with your child. Similarly, as mentioned above, the school day will look very different.

Parent help and visitors

Some parents have emailed and offered help and support in classes. This is so kind but, at no point, will a parent be permitted in the school building. As per Government guidance, we are working to ensure the minimum number of adults are in the building at any one time so, staff who are able to work at home will do so. We will not be able to welcome visitors.

Expectation of you

We respectfully expect every family, with a child attending school, to follow the Government guidelines for usual life at all times. This does contradict what is taking place in schools so we appreciate that there may be some confusion. I have a duty of care to protect the children but also my staff. With this in mind, may I politely remind you that families must not meet with other families out of school and, if meeting one other person, it must be at 2 metre distance and only be outside. My staff are coming into work, with the known fact that it is unlikely that they can socially fully distance with every child. As said above, children naturally will move towards people. Some staff members have fully socially distanced up until now, not even attending shops. I ask that you respect them and try to ensure that the contact they have with essentially the wider community is kept to a minimum. For example, if you follow the guidelines stringently, then the maximum they will have contact with is you and your families. Not you, your neighbours or your extended family from down the road. Please note that we are in regular contact with all our staff and have ensured that those with significant medical needs are not in work. That said, some have conditions such as non-severe asthma and others live with over 70 year olds, so I do want to ensure their safety as best I can. Many staff members are anxious about returning to school but will of course do so. As ever, once here, they will give their all but it is very important that you recognise this and kindly respect them by following all guidance accordingly.

PPE

The government has also provided guidance on the appropriateness of PPE which is as follows:

- wearing a face mask or covering is not recommended in schools as these are only needed when you are in close social contact with those you do not normally meet with, eg on public transport or in shops.
- face coverings should not be worn by those who may not be able to handle them such as young children.
- most staff will not require PPE even if they cannot always stay 2 metres away from others.
- PPE will be required when staff are responsible for intimate care needs of pupils. PPE will also be required if a learner becomes unwell whilst at school and is awaiting being taken home. In this instance a facemask will be necessary if a 2-metre distance cannot be kept. Gloves, aprons and facemasks should be worn if contact is required with the symptomatic individual.
- PPE should be acquired through local supply chains and it is advised that schools may need a small supply available for exceptional cases such as where a child has developed COVID-19 symptoms and is waiting to be able to go home (we believe that we will have adequate levels of PPE but again, will continue to risk assess accordingly).

Suspected cases

If a child becomes unwell during the day, they will be immediately isolated in a designated, ventilated space, with a member of staff from their hub. This member of staff will be provided with PPE. It is vital that you ensure that your school emergency contact details are up to date or have someone who is able to pick up your child quickly, if you are unable to do that yourself. Any child showing signs or symptoms, must be kept at home and self-isolate as per the guidance. Any child showing any symptoms will be sent home until they have either followed the recommended isolation period or received a test that shows they are negative.

Any child or adult displaying symptoms, should self-isolate for 7 days if alone. Members of their household, should self-isolate for 14 days. Access to testing is granted for both child and person(s) in contact, if showing symptoms, in line with key worker status. Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class/group within their childcare hub or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The remainder of the school do not need to self-isolate unless they have come into contact or subsequently develop symptoms.

Attendance

Whilst the Government notes that children are to be encouraged to attend school, they have said that parents will not be fined for non-attendance. Children who take up a school place will be expected to come every day of the week (unless unwell). It is not a drop in option and consistency is required.

The government advises that those who are shielded / clinically extremely vulnerable are still advised to not work outside the home. They add that those who are clinically vulnerable need to take extra care to observe social distancing and should work from home where possible. We will engage those staff in work such as supporting home learning education, carrying out lesson planning or other roles which can be done from home. If a child or a member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting. If they live with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable they should only attend a setting if social distancing can be adhered to. If a child needs to remain at home, they should be supported to learn at home. All staff and pupils will be eligible for testing if they develop symptoms.

Questions and moving forward

It is inevitable that many of you will have a range of questions hence why I encourage you to read the guidance documents as available by the Government above. We have included all that we can share, at this point, in this email so, we do ask that before you get in touch, you first read everything that we have provided thoroughly. If the information really cannot be found in what we have sent please then, and only then, get in touch. Similarly, please don't get in touch regarding information that we have said we will share in due course eg regarding which class teacher will teach which Hub, start, finish times etc. Your support in this matter really would be appreciated. We know our school community well and, as said, will make our final decisions, regarding the safety of pupils, and staff, based on our own individual risk assessments. You too know your children and I'm sure you will make your own decisions based on what you feel is safest, not only for your child but for your family. You know that we will do our absolute best to try to ensure the best possible safety to all in our care and of course follow guidelines thoroughly. However, this ultimately remains a decision best placed with families based on what they have been told regarding nationwide policy mixed and policy for schools.

It would really help with our planning if we could ascertain your initial thoughts regarding attendance. Please can you contact ruthyahiatene@cottesmore.brighton-hove.sch.uk (her email address is also on the Admissions page of the school website) by Tuesday 19th May, regarding whether your child (add their name and class please) will or will not take up their place. Please can you email either way so that we can keep a clear register. We appreciate that your thoughts might change and, in this case, just send another email. Please also identify if your child will be ordering a school packed lunch which will be free for Reception and Year 1, as per usual, and charged, via Parent Pay for Year 6.

Please rest assured that we will continue providing everything to the standard that we currently are and that all children are in our thoughts constantly. We want to help educate them academically as best we can, support them emotionally but also do whatever we can to keep them as safe as possible. Not to mention supporting your families. Please trust me when I say that I, appreciate how hard it is, and has been, for many of you who are trying to juggle everything. Like other members of our staff team, both my husband and I are full time key workers, with a child (mine is 2.5 years old) who has been at home. It has been full-on ensuring that we provide quality childcare for our own families, be physically in school / sometimes work from home all whilst making sure that our work is completed to the best of our ability and that everyone in the school community is supported. Your kind words throughout have been appreciated by all. This has been a real community effort and we are very blessed.

We do not know what the news will tell us next but we do know that we all must work together as a community, and as a country, to do whatever we can to help keep people safe. Here's to whatever light the future might hold. Please say hello to all the children and remind them that we think of them often. As ever, we are always here if you need anything at all. Please keep staying aware and staying safe and let's keep following those rainbows...

Many thanks,

Rachel Breen (Headteacher)



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