



Cottesmore St. Mary

Catholic Primary School

THE DIOCESE OF ARUNDEL AND BRIGHTON



Headteacher: Rachel Breen B.A. Hons.

22nd May 2020

Dear parents / carers

I hope that you, and your families, remain well. I'm writing to update you, as much as I can, at this present time. As you can imagine, it's been a very busy week our end so a huge thank you for your supportive emails, they really are appreciated.

Guidance is that schools must only open once they are certain that it is absolutely safe to do so and that we must do so with caution. We will only scale up our provision once we have reassured ourselves that it is the right thing to do. Whilst I appreciate that many children are looking forward to returning to school, we must only do so once our risk assessment identifies that this is possible. With this in mind, we, like most other schools, will need some further time in order to ensure such matters. I am sincerely sorry for any potential disappointments. Below are our earliest, possible, suggested start dates.

However, as we wait for further Government updates and guidance, please note that these may change. We will know more, post Thursday 28th May, when the Government make further announcements. In the meantime, our current proposal is ...

Thursday 4th June, welcome back three of the Year 6 Hubs. We will welcome the remaining two Year 6 Hubs on Friday 5th June and then welcome the whole year group, on Monday 8th June. We will inform you which children will return when, by Tuesday 2nd June.

Tuesday 9th June, plan to extend opening to children in Year 1.

Thursday 11th June, we plan to further extend opening to children in Reception.

These dates will be dependent on Government guidance, and local rates of infection. In addition to numbers wishing to attend school, the level of national social distancing, staff able to attend school, plus, for Year 1 and Reception, the success rate of the Year 6 return. Please note that all these dates are subject to change.

We will remain open for Key Worker children from Monday 1st June. Please note that our provision for this group is suggested, as per current Government guidance, to be only used if the child is unable to be looked at safely at home by another household member.

We have completed a very comprehensive and detailed risk assessment. We received additional guidance yesterday (Thursday) and are still waiting for further local and national information before we can risk assess fully. Our existing document has been updated as best it can be and this will be shared

with staff and Governors by end of today. All must have ample time to digest and question and will do so early next week. The Governors and I are then hoping to have a final document by the end of next week, post Government announcements. Whilst much preparation work has already been completed, we will need time, post the final risk assessment review, to make any further arrangements and preparations.

Staff are receiving phased, physical, small group briefings, not to mention a range of training. We will no doubt need to revisit the make-up of Hubs, plus it's likely that we will receive updated guidance regarding which staff can and can't attend school which may impact our organisational structure. Staff will complete preparation tasks for year groups coming into school, not to mention continue to support the remaining year groups who have not been invited to return. Over the last week, teachers, TA's, cleaners and Tim have done a super job physically preparing the school. Every classroom, and shared space, has been emptied so that there is nothing at all in them apart from tables, chairs and the odd unit that is empty. The classrooms look very different. Staff have come into school who, up until now, haven't left the house so I'd like to thank them for that big first step.

What's struck me most is how different the school set up will be for children and how vital it is that we, and you, prepare them for what's to come. Before children return, we will send them a video, via Seesaw, introducing them to the adults who will be in their Hub base whilst also showing them the space in which they'll be working. It is really important that you talk this through with them as the spaces do look and feel every different. In KS2, the desks are set up in lines and in KS1, the round tables, will only house one child. What the children can or can't do in school is also going to be very different. For example, they won't have any freedom to walk anywhere unless supervised. Even walking to the toilet will have to be supervised by an adult (who will obviously wait outside) but will be done on a 1:1 basis in order to avoid cross over of children. The children won't be able to put things in cloakrooms, walk to the office or walk alongside their friend in a corridor. Children won't be able to walk around the classroom at any point, other than when they enter and leave.

As guidance stands, children will line up outside, 2 metres apart at the start of every day. They will then be asked one by one to wash their hands before being walked up to their classrooms, spaced out, one Hub at a time. Children will then have to go straight to their desk, or table, one by one. Here, they will remain unless being taken to the toilet or until they are shown out of class, one by one, to go to their designated outdoor space, where solid social distancing will also remain. Children will remain at their tables to eat lunch as boxes will be stored under their desk. Staff will be required to follow social distancing at all times therefore, the class set up will be that of a somewhat outdated model, with the adult at the front and children in rows, all looking at the front. Due to our classroom sizes, older children won't be able to move chairs at their desks as they are measured at 2 metre square with very little wriggle room. In all classes, even with less children lower down the school and the likelihood that we

will split Year 6 into 5 Hubs, there will still be minimal space in rooms, outside of the 2 metre squared. This means that, in most, staff won't be able to move around tables or interact with children in the way with which they are all used to.

When working, classes will need to be relatively quiet so that those eg needing help at the back can put up their hand, have their request heard and have the support given verbally from the front. This too feels different for us adults so I can only imagine how different to will be for the children. This model will reduce privacy plus not offer staff the opportunity to visit a child and support them close by. Staff will of course continue to be friendly, supportive and encouraging, even if the way learning has to take place feels less so. I am sure that many children are excited about returning and please rest assured that we will obviously do all we that we can to foster that excitement when they do arrive. That said, it is vital that parents share this new way of school life, in advance, in order to avoid potential disappointment. Please also remind the children that they will only be with part of their class (in Year 6, one Hub will actually be a mix of the two classes) and potentially a different teacher and different classroom. It is vital that their expectations are well managed as we want to keep children's thoughts about school, and education, to be as positive as possible. You know that our staff team are friendly and nurturing and that they will of course do everything possible to make learning fun and engaging but, by the very nature of the way classes must be organised alone, it will no doubt feel more formal. In the meantime, if you have any wellbeing concerns, please contact Anna Mullans annamullans@cottesmore.brighton-hove.sch.uk

The choice remains yours as to whether you choose to send your child back to school, or not, and we will respect your decision either way. I know that you will have no doubt given it serious consideration and will continue to do so as time goes on. All I ask is that you keep in touch with regards to any attendance changes. I am aware that these are challenging times for all and that everyone's circumstance is different. Rest assured that we have everyone's best interests at the forefront of all that we do and please note that we want to get children back to school as soon as possible but that we must only do so in a way that maximises the safety of all. We take our responsibility towards you very seriously. Thank you all for your patience and continued support.

As ever, I'm always here if you need any support at all. Rachel Breen, Headteacher



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