

13 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: C19 – Planning for Phased Return

I hope this letter finds your family well. May I firstly thank you for your continued partnership and for giving us the space to plan for the possible phased return according to the government's instruction on Sunday, 10th May. I know there will be a mixture of feelings about the plans – ranging from those who will be relieved and pleased that schools can start to return to those who will be afraid and concerned about what this means for the health of their children and families.

We are in the process of planning for this phased return that requires significant logistical and resourcing matters to be addressed. Please do bear with us whilst we focus on this over the coming weeks; we may not in this time, be able to respond to individual comments/queries.

Meanwhile, I thought it would be helpful to share with you extracts from the document that we have today, received from the government, and our thoughts/variations that we will need to consider. I apologise for the length of this document however, with such an important task ahead, it is important that parents and carers can see the basis upon which we – and all schools – are working.

All citations below are from, 'Coronavirus (COVID 19): Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare settings', 11th May 2020, Department for Education.

We have heard that:

"We will ask secondary schools... to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 pupils who are due to take key exams next year, alongside the full time provision they are offering to priority groups".

This is really positive news for our school community. We are also thinking about how some small group support may be possible for Year 10 pupils – focusing on the practical elements of their learning that can be done at home. What is *not clear from central government* at this stage is where schools and parents stand with respect to the legal attendance of their children at school. We await further

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information on this although there seems to be a strong emphasis that children should return to school.

As part of our planning, given the health consideration of adults in school, we will operate a “two teams” approach – with one team of colleagues working in school to facilitate face-to-face education whilst others continue to provide learning from home. This will put a significant strain on resources owing to the reduced class sizes and number of colleagues who will be needed in school therefore, we ask for your understanding as we – like other schools - do our best to meet this challenge.

Personal Protective Equipment

“Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings. Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus”.

“Face coverings (or any form of medical mask where instructed to be used for specific clinical reasons) should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission”.

“The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others”.

The School will operate in accordance with this information from central government. We are concerned that wearing of facemasks could be unsettling for some pupils and we are mindful of how important it is to take account of their emotional wellbeing at this time. If for any reason the instruction changes, we will act accordingly.

Shielded and Vulnerable Children

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“For the vast majority of children and young people, coronavirus is a mild illness. Children and young people who have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. **We do not expect these children to be attending school or college, and they should continue to be supported at home as much as possible.** Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A small minority of children will fall into this category, and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category”.

As a core part of our partnership with parents, we will liaise with you on an individual basis with respect to your child’s needs. Children who have an EHCP will continue to have their education co-ordinated by Ms Wilden and Mr Page; a specific risk assessment will be adapted in partnership with parents. There will be individual and separate communication about this support.

Living with a vulnerable person

“If a child, young person 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 a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable ... it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home”.

Again, we will liaise with families on an individual basis in due course.

Class and Group Sizes

“We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account. Schools should therefore work through the hierarchy of measures set out above:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups”.

“Public Health England (PHE) is clear that if early years settings, schools and colleges do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered”.

“Where settings can keep children and young people in those small groups 2 metres away from each other, they should do so. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk”.

“For secondary schools and colleges, the same principle of halving classes will normally apply. It is also sensible to rearrange classrooms and workshops with sitting positions 2 metres apart. Where very small classes might result from halving, it would be acceptable to have more than half in a class, provided the space has been rearranged. Again, support staff may be drawn on in the event there are teacher shortages, working under the direction of other teachers in the setting”.

“Ensure that the same teacher(s) and other staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, these stay the same during the day and on subsequent days, recognising for secondary and college settings there will be some subject specialist rotation of staff”.

Given the size of our rooms, it is most likely that we will be working on the basis of 12-15 pupils in a class. The guidance allows for rotation of teachers in order to facilitate specialist teaching so this is welcome news and makes attendance at school more worthwhile. Again, this will in effect mean that for every one class, we would need 2-3 teachers to be in school therefore, having an inevitable impact on our capacity to provide the same levels of learning at home for those in school. We know this is far from ideal and will of course, continue to do the best that we can in these circumstances.

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It is not yet clear what – if any – measures will be taken to adjust the demands of the final examinations for pupils who are currently in Year 10. We are making representation to all appropriate bodies that this needs to be an urgent consideration for this cohort and will share with you any updates as appropriate. It is a matter about which we feel most strongly given the intensity of the linear courses that are currently in place.

We share parents' concerns about missed education and would like to reassure you that we are doing all we can to make the necessary adjustments to our whole school planning so that children can continue to enjoy learning and make strong progress. Educational success and health/wellbeing are intrinsically linked and with the partnership of parents and carers, we are confident that this fine balance can be achieved in our school moving forwards.

Other measures

We will implement additional measures to minimise risk as we implement a phased return. Including:

- asking parents/carers to only attend the setting if absolutely necessary;
- asking that only one parent/carer collects their child at the end of the day;
- not using volunteers at this stage;
- share with parents/carers, resources that should be used with your children to educate them about the safety measures in place; we will mirror this in school;
- children must bring their own stationery to school and carry tissues;
- lessons requiring equipment such as computers and practical resources will have additional cleaning protocols in place;
- adjustments to the School's behaviour policy will be made.

What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting?

"When a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario".

“Where the child, young person or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation”.

“Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.”

“As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England’s local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary”.

As has always been the case, we will liaise directly with Public Health England and other official contacts should a situation arise and will act accordingly. In order to avoid any potential upset for individuals during this sensitive time, we kindly ask for your partnership in not using groups such as WhatsApp to discuss any potential cases as this could lead to misinformation being shared or fear among others. We will communicate directly with parents and families as needed.

Should educational settings ask parents to report pupils’ temperatures at the start of each day?

“Parents, carers and settings do not need to take children’s temperatures every morning. Routine testing of an individual’s temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus”.

Will children and young people be eligible for testing?

“When settings open to the wider cohort of children and young people, all those children and young people eligible to attend, and members of their households, will have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus. This will enable them to get back into childcare or education, and their parents or carers to get back to work, if the test proves to be negative. To access testing parents will be able to use the 111 online coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is aged under 5”.

Next steps:

As we know, the phased reopening of schools is conditional and won't be confirmed until nearer the time. However, we are working towards this plan and will communicate the detail with you in due course.

With best wishes,

Mrs. Dean