

20th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re-opening of Watling Park School for Reception and Year 1 pupils

Further to last week's communications regarding our re-opening, please see finalised information about our plan and procedures below along with our in-depth re-opening plan attached. The work that has taken place behind the scenes in order to address the numerous aspects related to a safe re-opening of the school has taken many, many hours and days and has been undertaken in liaison with the SLT, staff in Reception and Year 1, the wider staff group, the Trust, Barnet and our Chair of the LAB, Sharma Ruddock.

There are no easy answers to how we do this and we have had to draw on what we have seen working with the group of children currently attending school as well as consulting with wider organisations/groups and undertaking thorough risk assessments of every aspect.

Our focus:

Underpinning every decision and action has been my overriding focus on ensuring the health and safety of each and every member within our school community. While I can never 100% guarantee anyone's safety, even in our normal day-to-day routines, I can assure you that the risk assessments and solutions we have decided on have been taken to ensure we can minimise risk in all areas to the smallest possible.

Bubble groups

Our youngest children will find the concept of self-isolating an extremely challenging one and, for their emotional and social well-being, should not be expected to. The children will be encouraged to exercise social distancing wherever possible but no one will be upset with them if they don't. To help address this, we have had to find a way to limit access between large numbers of children and adults but also provide them with the opportunity to play and learn together.

Introducing 'bubbles' – what are they and how will they work?

You may have heard this term referred to a lot recently. It refers to a small, group of people who mix with each other consistently. We will use this concept to group the children in smaller 'bubbles' so they are able to mix together without the need for stringent social distancing at all times as they will remain together throughout the time they are at school.

They will be in class groups together, complete activities together, have play times in their bubble, eat lunch with the children in their bubble; basically spend their days at school together in their bubble.

To reduce the risk of cross contamination between bubbles, each bubble will use a consistent classroom, set of tables, resources, toilets and dining hall and playground zones. Staff have begun to separate resources so there is reduced risk of cross bubble contamination. Children in each bubble will keep their belongings together and each child will be issued with their own set of pencils, glue, scissors, paper, etc. to use. Each bubble will also have consistent staff assigned to it.

Therefore, our plan takes the concept of 'bubble' groups in a similar way to what has happened with the current group of children on-site. They have been regularly attending and have developed relationships with each other allowing them to mix together and maintain their safety net as well as providing them with the much needed, physical contact with others much more safely.

Given research information from WHO chief research scientists and other key medical groups indicates that infection in children is extremely low and that, unlike it was originally thought at the start of understanding the virus, they are also much less likely to transmit the virus to others, this allows them to be as protected as possible. These 'bubbles' of children (no more than 8 or 9 in Reception and no more than 10 in Year 1) will ensure there will be limited cross-spreading across bubbles while supporting the children to have a regular and consistent group of children to interact with.

This also allows adults to have limited contact with children and the ability to maintain social distancing is more successful. The model has worked seamlessly over the past months with only some tweaks needed. We are confident this model will also work as we welcome Reception and Year 1 children back to school.

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What will the week look like?

To enable this model to work and also because we have a range of staff who are unable to return to school full time in these year groups along with the need to continue to offer home/remote learning for these and the other year groups not attending school, our offer is for children to **return 2 full days a week (staggered start and end times) and access the home/remote learning for the remaining days** as they have been doing since the lockdown.

Our priority for the next two months is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and staff. We look forward to getting back to vital learning but our key focus will be centred on the emotional and social wellbeing of pupils – re-establishing friendships, talking and playing safely within bubbles, re-visiting routines and understanding expectations as well as preparing pupils for their move to the next year group. The main curriculum focus will continue via the remote learning provision but there will obviously be some focus on this in school also.

Your child will attend school on either Monday and Tuesday or Wednesday and Thursday. Siblings will all be grouped to attend on the same days. We considered offering half days for 4 days a week but this would double the number of people accessing the school and also reduce the amount of time children would be in school further due to the need to extend the staggered starts and collections even further.

We are aware that many families need to use public transport to get to school. This is something you will need to consider given the government's advice is still to avoid the use of public transport at peak periods. You will be aware of the peak periods for your travel journeys and while the end of the school day may fall outside this, the morning drop off time is a more complex one.

If your child is returning:

To support you to understand and appreciate all the aspects we have considered and to provide you with as much information as possible to help you to understand what will be in place and how the return to school will look, I have attached our in-depth plan for your information. I am also currently collating all our risk assessments into one document which will be published on our website as soon as it has been completed and reviewed.

Agreement from parents to help ensure safety across the wider community:

Parents who chose to return their child to school in Reception or Year 1 will be asked to agree some key points. This is because we are beginning to extend the numbers of people mixing within school and we must work together to safeguard each other and whatever vulnerabilities families in our community may be working to protect. These are as much to keep you safe as they are to show respect and acknowledge that every family situation is different to our own. The agreement you will be asked to sign will include:

1. You will ensure you and your family follow the government guidelines regarding social distancing, regular hand washing outside of school and avoid mixing with others outside the family home 'bubble' unless absolutely necessary.
2. You agree to have your child's temperature taken on arrival at school and throughout the day as deemed appropriate by staff. This will be recorded.
3. If your child displays a high temperature or any other signs associated with the virus, you will urgently travel to school to collect them and agree to keep them self-isolated for the recommended amount of time (PHE recommends 7 days).
4. You will inform the school immediately should anyone within your house bubble develop any symptoms associated with the virus and follow the guidance provided.
5. You will ensure your child arrives and is collected at the assigned times to limit the possibility of cross-bubble mixing for your child or yourself.
6. You understand that it will not be possible for your child to change bubbles or days to limit the chance of cross-bubble mixing.
7. You will agree to your child having free school dinners during this period of time to limit the number of items being brought in to school and avoid cross-contamination. (If this is not possible due to medical reasons, please email the office immediately).
8. You will provide your child with a named water bottle.



9. You agree to send your child into school wearing suitable comfortable clothing (e.g. track suit bottoms/shorts, t-shirts or loose tops, plimsolls or trainers without laces, cardigan/jumper hoodie - no jeans, belts, heeled shoes, accessories or hair bands – hair ties or elastics are advised)
10. Sun lotion will be applied prior to your child coming to school.
11. You understand that reading books will not be sent home during this time.
12. Your child will not bring a bag or items to and from school apart from their water bottle and cardigan /jumper/hoodie.
13. You will provide a current contact number for the school can contact you throughout the day if required.

What we need from you:

If your child is in Reception or Year 1 please ensure you also read the attached re-opening plan as it gives a lot of detail regarding all the aspects we have addressed.

Now that you have more detail, if you would like your child to return to school from week beginning 1st June 2020, please either send a message to your class teacher via ClassDojo or email the office (office@watlingparkschool.org.uk) with your child's name, class and a simple YES or NO to inform us so we can make final arrangements.

Even if you have already told us that you will be sending your child back to school, please reconfirm.

Teachers/office staff will then contact you to inform you which days (Monday and Tuesday OR Wednesday and Thursday) your child will attend and their drop off/collection times.

Can I change my mind after a week or two...?

If you decide at a later date that you would like your child to attend school, please email the office with your request or message your teacher via ClassDojo. You will then receive confirmation of the start date (from the following week) and which days they will be attending.

Further information:

I am sure you will have questions and I have been asked for a FAQ page but at this point in time, I have not had a minute to be able to put this together, however, please do look at the information contained in this link to the guidelines set out by the DfE. Due to staffing limitations, we are not able to open up for all children to attend for a full week but, hopefully, it will help your understanding as to why we are making the considerations listed above and in the attached document:

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

We will be reviewing these procedures daily and trust that the introduction of the 'new normal' for a wider group of children is as seamless as it has been for those children who have been accessing school throughout thanks to the vigilance and dedication of our amazing staff!

Whether your child is returning to school or not, I want to take this opportunity to reassure all our pupils that this 'new normal' won't last forever and they are still very much part of our Watling Park family. Should you choose not to return your child to school due to the challenges of public transport use or family vulnerabilities, we will continue to provide home/remote learning provision.

We are so looking forward to welcoming at least some of our children back to school and hope that we will be in a position to open to further year groups soon too. I appreciate your patience and understanding during this difficult time for all.

See some of you back soon and hope to see more of you back in the coming weeks (written with a big smile on my face in eager anticipation)!

Kind regards,

Mrs S Quartson
Headteacher

