



18th May 2020

POTENTIAL PARTIAL RE – OPENING OF SCHOOL FROM 8TH JUNE 2020

I am writing to update you after the recent announcements regarding partial school re-opening. I am now in a position to offer you more information on what this re-opening might look like for pupils returning to Dowson in the hope that you will then be able to make an informed decision in the best interests of your child.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your patience and support during this challenging time. You have managed the most difficult of circumstances with resilience and tenacity to ensure that your children and other members of the community stay safe whilst continuing to learn and thrive from home and it has been heart-warming to see updates on Dojo and the Dowson Family Facebook Page. Your support of both school and each other's efforts during this time has been undeniably strong and this makes me one very proud Principal.

As you are already aware, I have been directed by the Government to plan for a partial re-opening of school for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This will commence on the 8th June (in line with Tameside's term dates). School has remained open to children of key workers and those who are considered 'vulnerable' during the period of lockdown and this will also continue, even if those children do not fall into the returning year groups. The home learning offer for the children in year groups who have not been called back will also continue in this next phase of development.

Since the announcement from our Prime Minister, I have taken the extensive guidance from the government, and worked closely with Enquire Learning Trust and the Local Authority to create my initial plans for a return to school for some pupils. I will also continue to act upon any further guidance and update the plans I have made in light of the latest information available to me at every stage of the process.

My utmost priority is the safety of our pupils, their families and indeed my staff. The plans in place aim to reduce the risks as far as is practically possible to do so in a primary school setting in order that school is as safe as it can be for everyone. I don't mind sharing with you all that this is the biggest challenge as a school leader that I have faced to date. So much is at stake and I care a great deal about getting it right for the whole school community whom I care deeply for. However, I hope that you all know well enough by now that all members of Team Dowson and I will make the very best of this situation for everyone involved.

I completely understand that you may have some anxieties and concerns around your children possibly returning to school at the moment, there is so much uncertainty surrounding the virus in medical terms and much media coverage on whether schools are opening too soon, which is - to say the least - unhelpful. Whilst I follow the directive from the government to plan for the re-opening of school, I feel strongly that it is also my duty to provide you with the latest information I have available to me to support you in making an informed decision, based on our school and your child rather than assumptions from what you read in the media. It is important to note here that I **will not** re-open Dowson if the government do not meet the 5 key indicators of recovery they have set out; this is a





position supported by the Enquire Learning Trust and Trustees have declared that should these tests not be met, no ELT school will re-open. I hope that this is further confirmation to you that we have everyone's safety at the forefront of everything we are doing in making these plans.

The guidance from the government states that it is in your child's best interests to return to school and we should strongly encourage you to send your children back. I wholeheartedly agree that a return to school would undoubtedly have many benefits for our children developmentally, socially, emotionally and academically and I know that you will feel the same in that respect. Ultimately, I also believe that in the current circumstances, this must be your choice as a parent and although I am usually a stickler for attendance, I believe the decision to not penalise parents who choose not to send their children back to school is the correct one. This decision must be yours and yours alone.

So, to help you make an informed decision, I have set out here two main areas of information that I know will be of interest when considering your position. What will it look like – because it will be different to the way your children remember school when they left - and what measures will be in place to make sure everyone is as safe as possible?

Although every effort will be made to socially distance children, it has been acknowledged in the guidance that this may not always be possible, especially with our youngest children. It is important that you recognise this! You know children: they have little understanding, particularly our youngest, of personal space let alone what 2m social distancing looks like; they will play together, they may well need some close care such as first aid and they will forget themselves often, no matter what we put in place or how many reminders we give.

However, there are measures that will be put in place in order to reduce the risks **as far as practically possible** which include:

- Children will be grouped in a 'bubble' of up to 15 children. They will only mix with those children throughout the day and usually the same adults.
- They will be seated at their own desk, or carpet spot for our youngest, in a distanced fashion (not necessarily 2 metres but enough not to touch each other) and be provided with a personalised set of every day equipment, where possible, which only they will use.
- Any equipment that is shared between children in a group, or across groups, will be subject to protocols around quarantine and / or sanitisation before the next person or group uses this.
- Staggered starts/finishes/play times and lunchtimes will be implemented so 'bubbles' of children do not mix throughout the day as far as is practically possible.
- Adults who accompany children to school will be expected to maintain stringent social distancing and only one adult from the same household will be allowed to accompany their child to school.
- There will be clear one way systems for dropping off and collecting children, which are socially distanced and you will be given an allotted time slot to arrive which you will be expected to adhere to in the interests of the safety of everyone.





- Strict regimes of regular hand washing throughout the day, including on entry to and exit from school, will be adhered to. There will also be hand sanitiser available in each office entrance and in the dining halls.
- Cleaning regimes in school will ensure that all classrooms and shared areas, particularly touch points, are cleaned more regularly throughout the day.
- Children (or any members of their household) who have any sign of illness must not attend.
- Children who are attending school, and their family members, are entitled to request a test for COVID 19 if they display symptoms.
- If a member of the 'bubble' of children or adults is tested positive for COVID 19, all the members of the group (including the adults) and the rest of their household will need to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Children who are shielding themselves, living with someone who is shielding or who are classed as 'clinically vulnerable' due to health conditions should not attend. You may wish to seek medical advice from your child's GP if you are unsure whether your child should attend if they have any medical conditions.

Other considerations:

- The return to school may be phased, at least over the first week, in order to gradually build up and establish new routines. This means that not all returning year groups will definitely start on the 8th June.
- Your child may not be taught by their own teacher.
- Your child may not have the same teacher every day.
- Siblings not in the year groups specified to return will not be eligible to attend school unless they are critical worker children or those considered as vulnerable in line with the original offering of places during lockdown.
- Nursery provision will only be offered in line with your usual sessions.
- We will try and ensure at least some of your child's friends are in the same group.
- There is no breakfast or after school club provision apart from the slightly longer hours of 8:30-4pm that are offered only to those children of critical workers. All other pupils will receive a school day offer of 8:50-3:15 with the possibility of slightly earlier or later start and finish times to support the staggered starts for social distancing of adults around these times.
- No parents or carers will be allowed into the school buildings at any time and all communication with school must be via telephone, email or class dojo messenger.
- The curriculum in school for our younger year groups will very much be focused on catching up and preparing them for a successful start to the following year group by ensuring the basics they need in Reading, Writing and Maths are secured as far as possible.
- For year 6 this will involve the work we would usually undertake to prepare them for successful and confident starts to high school and will also cover some of the important elements of the wider curriculum that are needed in order to make that transition such as the relationships education units they have not yet been taught.
- Home-learning for those year groups invited back into school will no longer be provided except for those children who are unable to attend due to medical reasons. This is because teachers of those year groups will be required to plan, prepare and teach their own year groups in school.





DOWSON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Marlborough Road, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 5HU. Tel: 0161 366 0177. Fax: 0161 366 0546
Principal : Kathryn Thornburn (BSc Hons, NPQH)
Dowson Primary Academy 0161 366 0177



- Free school meal vouchers for children who are eligible in any of the groups invited back to school will also cease as the meal offer will be in school in taking up the place. Again, the exception will be for those children unable to attend due to medical reasons.
- Children will be expected to wear school uniform, and for this to be clean each day, though we will be mindful that there may be some cases where children have outgrown parts of their uniform and we will work with families where this is the case to find a reasonable solution.

I know that much of this may seem daunting, it certainly has felt that way when planning it all. However, I hope you will understand the reasons behind all of the measures and that they in some way also offer some reassurance of the reduction in risk. I also hope that the information provided will help to bring you to a reasoned and informed decision for your child.

Whatever you decide, it is imperative for us to know your decision so that we can begin to put more firm plans in place and provide more information, where necessary, to those who will be attending. Therefore, I will be sending a quick survey to the relevant year groups to gain an idea of what your decisions might be at this moment in time with the information you now have.

Please complete the survey, which will be sent tomorrow, indicating whether you intend to send your child back to school on Monday 8th June or not? Responses should be sent by Thursday 21st May. If at any point, you reconsider, you must inform admin@dowson.tameside.sch.uk as soon as possible. Your child's attendance must be confirmed to you by school before attending. We will do this by sending out the additional details closer to the time.

If you have any further queries or questions, you can contact me directly on the school phone number or through the above email address. I will reply as soon as possible.

Assuring you, as always, of our best intentions.

Warmest regards

Mrs Kathryn Thornburn
Principal.

