



3rd September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you have had a good and relaxing summer break. We are all looking forward to seeing the children back on Monday. As was communicated in July, I am writing to confirm arrangements for the start of the new term on Monday 6th September.

On Wednesday, I attended a Local Authority Coronavirus Update meeting for headteachers. We have looked carefully at the new guidance and have updated our Risk Assessment accordingly. In addition, we have created a Covid Outbreak Management Plan, as per Government Guidance. I'm sure many of you will be aware that in line with the government's roadmap out of lockdown, many of the safety precautions put into place in schools last academic year are no longer required.

Outbreak Management

In the event of 2 or more positive cases in school we will be advised by PHE about the need to ask groups within the school to 'self-isolate'. The 'Outbreak Management Plan' takes into consideration the amendments that may need to take place to mitigate further risks of cross-infection or the return of Remote Learning. We have attached a parent version of our Outbreak Contingency Plan to this email, and it can be accessed on our website, [HERE](#).

Changes to General Operation

- To reduce the risk to office staff and parents we ask that you continue to communicate via email or telephone where possible using the school office only to drop off medicines, pick up items etc. Our class email accounts will be back in action before the start of term and teachers will read and check those several times across each week.
- Children will return to sharing toilets, play areas, and dining hall with all other children but increased cleaning procedures and routines will remain in place. Children will be mainly sharing toilets and dining hall in year groups but the necessity to avoid mixing will not be in place.
- Children will be with their class teacher and adults that work in the same year group as much as possible but there will sometimes be a crossover of staff.
- Some support staff may move across year groups but will mitigate the risk of infection by keeping to the hygiene guidelines, washing hands between groups.
- Please refrain from sending children into school with rucksacks as we do not have the space in school to store these safely and they are unnecessary as pupils will only need to carry their reading book and water bottle to school. Reading books/diaries will be changed/checked more frequently.
- Water fountains will be used for the refill of water bottles only. Children will not be drinking from the water fountains so a named water bottle is essential.
- We will continue to ask all parents to drop off or pick up swiftly and then leave the site. We ask you not to stay on site any longer than necessary.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils, and it is a priority that as many children as possible regularly attend. The school has a duty to ensure good attendance and regularly monitors attendance. Where attendance becomes a cause for concern, the school policy will be followed.

Please note that holiday requests cannot be routinely authorised. Requests for leave can only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised holidays could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority.

As before, please continue to be aware of COVID-19 symptoms and remain vigilant. Please do not send your child into school if they have had a positive LFD/PCR test result or any of the following symptoms:

- new continuous cough
- fever
- loss of sense of smell or taste

Testing, Tracing and Self-Isolation

From 16th August, there have been significant changes to the rules around self-isolation. Starting in the Autumn term, pupils will only need to self-isolate if they have tested positive for coronavirus, meaning that pupils will not need to self-isolate if they are identified as being a close contact of a positive coronavirus case. Similarly, staff will not need to self-isolate if they are identified as having close contact with a positive case as long as they are fully vaccinated. School is no longer responsible for Test and Trace close contact tracing. This has been taken over by the NHS Test and Trace service, who will now inform staff and pupils if they have been in close contact with a positive case, and advise them to take a confirmatory PCR test. School will continue to have a role in working with local health protection teams (HPTs) when there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the wider community and a substantial increase in the number of positive cases in school or unsustainable pressure on NHS. The Director of Public Health may advise school to temporarily reintroduce control measures to help break chains of transmission. At this point we will operate the measures outlined in our contingency plan.

Start and end of the school day

Children with surnames starting between A and L should arrive between 8.30am and 8.45am, ready for 8.45am registration. School finishes at 3pm. Children with surnames starting between M and Z should arrive between 8.45am and 9am, ready for 9am registration. School finishes at 3.15pm. Children brought or collected by childminders should use the 8.45am – 3.15pm slot everyday.

In order to minimise congestion, we ask for all parents and carers to drop off and collect children without lingering on the school premises to chat. Please remember to be respectful to our neighbours and ensure the safety of our children by parking responsibly. There will be no crossing patrol for the first week back, but Mr. Bowran has kindly offered to help me manage the traffic situation in the mornings for this week.

Face Coverings

The Government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. School staff will continue to apply personal discretion to their use of a face covering in communal and small enclosed areas of school. Visitors to school may wish to continue to wear a face covering and it is understandable that some parents may wish to continue to wear face coverings when picking up and dropping off at school. School will respect these personal decisions. Please bear in mind that there are a high number of staff at Rackham who are clinically vulnerable and who may be required to wear face coverings as part of their individual risk assessments.

Year Group Bubbles

It is no longer recommended that pupils remain solely in consistent year group 'bubbles'. Pupils will be able to sit in groups at lunchtime and the need to sit facing forwards will no longer be in place. In the classrooms, teachers will also have greater flexibility when organising seating plans. In the event that cases rise, the school will follow the contingency plan which may include the necessity to reintroduce bubbles for a temporary period in order to reduce the mixing between year groups.

Worship

We will be reintroducing collective worship gradually to the whole school. This will be delivered in key stages to begin with as we are keenly aware that many of the infants have never experienced a whole school worship in the hall. We will hopefully be able to resume pre-pandemic worship as the term progresses. Until we are confident it is safe enough to do so, we will be continuing to use Zoom for our assemblies, to minimise the number of children in our hall.

Resources

Pupils should only bring essential items to school each day, e.g. lunch box, coat, water bottle and reading book. No toys including the latest craze of 'pop its' or additional items should be brought in.

Cleaning, hand hygiene and ventilation

We will continue with our rigorous stepped-up cleaning regime. This will continue to include regular cleaning of frequently touched areas and the toilets. Classroom resources e.g. books, iPads will continue to be disinfected regularly.

As part of our control measures, we will also continue to encourage regular hand washing. We will continue to ensure that your child cleans their hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

Children will share resources but increased cleaning will take place and children will be encouraged to wash hands regularly after use

Windows and doors will be open where possible to increase ventilation in classrooms . We have been informed by the DFE that all schools will receive carbon dioxide monitors to monitor suitable ventilation in the Autumn Term. We are awaiting further information but do not anticipate these will be delivered any time before half term and we are reliably informed there will not be enough monitors for every classroom.

Online remote learning

Our remote learning education plans remain in place in the event that your child has to self-isolate or if restrictions are reintroduced. While school attendance is mandatory, remote learning will be provided for pupils who are following clinical or Government guidance to stay at home e.g. where they are self- isolating. All pupils who are not physically unwell will be given access to remote learning as soon as is reasonably practicable. We will contact you within the next couple of weeks to share more information about our Remote Learning Offer.

School dinners

Dining in the hall will resume as it was pre-pandemic. If you would like your child to have school dinners, please ensure these are booked and paid for in advance via MCAS.

Whole school large events

At the moment, we will not be hosting large scale events that involve lots of adults/children in an enclosed space until we see how the situation unfolds. We will continue to keep this under review depending on the situation.

All of these precautions have been put into place to stop the spread of the virus and to ensure that we take as much care as possible. We are following Government guidelines to ensure we reduce the spread of infection.

For your information, this [Flow chart](#) can be followed for any suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19 in a child.

Please find attached further information with specific details for each year group.

As we look forward to the start of the new school year, our priority remains to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils and minimise the disruption caused by COVID-19. Although we may feel excitement at the prospect of returning to normal, we do need to continue to proceed with caution. We need to continue to work together to implement the control measures in school and continue to help reduce the risk of transmission, which will allow our pupils to remain in school.

All staff have been accessing virtual training over the past three days and are excited and ready for the start of another busy year. Our classrooms all look fantastic and our staff are well – rested and feeling positive about a return to school.

I will continue to keep you updated if guidance changes or arrangements need to be amended in response to Government advice or Cambridgeshire County Council guidance.

I look forward to a successful year working in partnership with our Witchford community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mrs Bridget Harrison
Headteacher