



SEATON VALLEY FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS

Eldson Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0BP

Tel: 0191 2371505

Fax: 0191 2376891

Email: reception@svf.org.uk

www.svf.org.uk

Chair of Governors: Susan Dungworth

Executive Headteacher: John Barnes

19 May 2020

Dear Parent/ Carers

You will have been watching the news and seeing on social media about schools reopening and I have also been in contact with you about this. The staff, governors and I have started planning and discussing how this will work to not only keep your child safe but to also protect and keep the staff safe too.

Thanks to those parents who completed my survey. Following the government announcement on Monday, they have then stated that they would like more children to return before the end of Summer term. As yet, we have not started planning for this as we need to assess how the return goes on June 1st.

A number of things have to happen before the schools can return and the guidance is stringent and detailed but as a federation, we have concerns about how this will affect children's social and emotional wellbeing. For a few families it has been essential school has remained open and I cannot imagine how difficult it has been for these parents and how worried they must have been about leaving their child at school so they can go and continue to do the key jobs like caring for our vulnerable people. We believe it was right providing schooling and childcare for these pupils and families and we are proud of what we have done.

As always, I will be completely transparent and honest with you about what school will look like when it opens on 1st June and I feel this is very important for you so you can make informed choices. The starting point is the fact that you are your child's parent and therefore you make the choice about the return of your child and the government has stated this. Some of our parents who want their child to return have stated this is because they have concerns about their child's mental health and well-being, however, I have to say that some of the measures we are going to have to take will completely work against this.

Since Monday, we have been in the two middle schools mapping out the classrooms to see what it would look like in order to keep children safe. You may have seen the pictures of what has happened in French schools following their return with regard to the classrooms and yard space and I cannot guarantee that there may not be a bit of this in our schools.

In a recent leadership team meeting, we were discussing the things that normally would be happening this term in school and the sad fact is that these events will NOT be possible in June. The school we want to see back is one where children run up and hug their friends and can be near to their teachers and talk to them and not be 2 meters away. We want a school where children can walk safely around a building without separation measures, or go to the toilet without supervision to ensure they wash their hands.

Below are some bullet points that summarise the measures and actions we will have to put in place to ensure safety for all - these are taken directly from the DFE guidance we have received this week. We will ask the parents and children returning to school to sign an agreement that they will support and keep to these new measures and rules so we can keep the children and staff safe.

- Children will be with one teacher in one group and not necessarily with the same groups of children they were with in March. They may not be with the teacher or classroom they had in March.
- They will have to remain in that classroom for the duration of the day. They cannot mix with the groups of children in the other classrooms.
- They will have their lunch in that room and will only be allowed out at break and lunch time but these will be staggered so that there can be no social interaction.
- We ask that pupils bring in a packed lunch.
- They will have set times for the toilet which will need to be cleaned after they have been used. Only one child will be allowed to the toilet at a time.
- They will sit at desks 2m apart.
- Their classrooms will have all unnecessary furniture and equipment removed and all soft furnishings removed.
- The classroom will be cleaned 3 times per day. The bins emptied throughout the day, desks cleaned and sprayed throughout. The classroom will be deep cleaned at the end of every day too.
- We will also need to have a deep clean of the schools before they fully re-open.
- The children will work at their desks, there will be very little movement around the room
- Children must have fully washed clean clothes every day. They do not need to wear uniform.
- They will not be able to bring anything from home. No reading books, no packed lunch boxes, their packed lunch must come in a bag that can be thrown away at the end of the day, no pencil cases will be allowed.
- They will be provided with a see-through pencil case and equipment that will only be used and touched by them. These will be cleaned at the end of the day by the teacher.
- When any other equipment is used, it will then need to be cleaned before other children use or touch it.
- When outside playing, equipment will not be able to be used as it is recommended these are cleaned afterwards but we would not have sufficient staff to do that at that stage.
- Most lessons will involve a lot of independent learning as the teacher will not be able to go side by side or sit next to them to give them targeted support needed. The teacher needs to keep social distance when teaching (the amount of distance keeps varying – to the public it is 2m but it has not been confirmed yet if this is the case for schools so we are operating on the same as the general public)
- Only one parent is allowed to drop off their child. There will be staggered starts to avoid too many people being around at any one time. There will also be staggered end of school times.
- This parent is NOT allowed to enter the school building or have any face to face contact or conversation with staff
- It is advised by the government that corridors are split and marked off to save children having to walk past people without a social distance.
- There will be no sports day
- There will be no assemblies
- As of now, we do not know what transport will be put on for those pupils who get bussed into school
- There will be no testing before school fully reopens for staff for pupils. Tests will be available if someone shows the signs of COVID-19 symptoms.

I do not want to alarm parents by sharing this information but I do think parents need to understand and know what school will look like in June, with increased numbers. These measures are what is needed to keep everyone safe and so I can try as much as possible to prevent the risk of illness.

I want to share with you the truth of it rather than the simple information that schools would resume and you all think this will be as it was in March. I am having regular online meetings with the other heads in the partnership and the measures above are similar to what the other schools will look like too.

What I will say to you is we absolutely want normality; we absolutely care and miss your children and we absolutely want things to return to normal and welcome those children back with open arms. Your child's mental health and well-being is our number one priority.

We will be planning on opening our doors to pupils in year 6 on June 1st alongside the key worker children we have had throughout and some priority children. I want to do this with you being aware of exactly what this will be like. As yet, the plans for the timings of the day and how drop offs and picks up will look etc have not been finalised. You can help me by letting me know asap who is planning to send their child back in June. If you have not yet done so please fill in the questionnaire. If you change your mind at any stage that is fine but please do let us know. Each middle school will be in touch with the parents of its year 6 pupils to give them the detailed information regarding their school's procedures for this return to school.

All of us in the federation know how lucky we are to work in a place with amazing parents, staff and children and I am sure that we will all get through this and the schools we love and know will come back stronger and we will have an even stronger community than before. All I can ask is that you bear with us as we go through the next few weeks.

As always take care and be safe.

Yours sincerely



John Barnes
Executive Headteacher