



# School Newsletter

With Christ we live, we love, we learn and we grow

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2020**

Dear Parents/ Carers

## **RE Wider re-opening of St Mary's School & Nursery from June 1<sup>st</sup> at the earliest**

Good evening and apologies in advance for the length of this newsletter. I am writing it in two parts with the second part following tomorrow night.

Thank you for your patience, I appreciate that many of you need to know sooner rather than later about the school's reopening arrangements. It is a very difficult exercise planning for a safe, wider reopening of school, as you can probably imagine. When we conducted the survey of parent's intentions last week for a reopening of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 classes, we had an excellent response from parents, which indicated a high take-up of places; many more than other schools locally and nationally as far as I could determine.

For the wider reopening of schools, the Government is advising schools to prioritise classes according to age, from youngest to oldest. St Mary's is unusual, although not unique, as a primary school, in that it also has a nursery class. Whilst most schools will be planning opening for three year groups, we were initially planning for the opening of four.

In addition, like all primary schools, we also need to accommodate children of critical workers; this group will also be much larger according to our survey. Given the high take up of places indicated by the survey findings, we were presented with the problem of being able to accommodate all the children and staff required, whilst adhering to effective social distancing advice and the health and safety guidelines. It proved a very difficult challenge.

Having consulted with staff and Governors, we are prioritising the reopening according to age and we have decided that at this stage, we cannot reopen school to our Y6 children from week beginning June 1st. I know that this may cause upset and inconvenience but we must prioritise the health and safety of the children and adults involved. I want to reassure you that the staff and Governors are eager to find a way of bringing Year 6 into school safely in some way and at some stage over the coming weeks and will be planning to do just that.

We will also consider how we can welcome back other year groups towards the end of term if the Government suggests it. This is a very ambitious aim given that we are already going to be using most of our available rooms.

Please be aware that our plans are subject to change depending upon on whatever the current advice and guidance is at the time and any lessons we learn during the process of implementing them.

### ***How will children be organised?***

The Government accepts that early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. So they have asked schools to work through this hierarchy of measures:

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

The idea, as most schools understand it, behind the final bullet point is that we create small 'bubbles' of no more than 15 children and an adult, which remain as separate as possible from each other during the day.

Therefore, each of our Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and the children of critical workers will be split into two groups of no more than 15 children. The adult that the child has supervising them may not be their usual class teacher.

The **Nursery** children will be based in the current Nursery and Reception classrooms. From there they will have access to the infant playground.

The **Reception** children will be based in the Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms where they will have access to the Early Years play area and the grassy area outside of those classrooms.

The **Year 1** children will be based in the Year 3 and Year 4 classroom and will access the KS2 playground and possibly sections of the field.

The children of **critical workers** will be based in the Hall, the Quad and potentially in the Year 5 and Year 6 classrooms and will also be able to use sections of the field.

It goes without saying, that this will not be school as the children know it. The classrooms are already looking very different. Staff have been in school rearranging desks and furniture to allow for the best possible social distancing. They have removed soft furnishings and items from surfaces to allow for good, deep cleaning. The cleaning staff have been into every nook and cranny to make the school as spotless as possible for the arrival of the children. I thank all of our staff for their great efforts.

### ***What will children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 be learning in school ?***

The priorities for the children at this time will be:

- resocialisation into new style school routines
- speaking and listening
- regaining momentum in particular with reading, writing and maths where appropriate – we will do our best to make learning as normal as possible within the limitations faced.
- children will be encouraged to exert themselves physically, e.g. playing supervised non-touch running games within their group.
- and to minimise likelihood of infection, where possible and practicable much of the learning will take place outside.

The activities planned for the children in Nursery and Reception and the resources used, will be very different to what the children are accustomed. For example, items such as play dough cannot be shared, resources for activities such as painting, sticking, cutting, small world play, indoor and outdoor construction activities will be washed before and after use and children will also be needed to refrain from sharing these. We are awaiting more detailed guidance on this from upcoming DfE guidance.

In Year 1, it is going to be very difficult to use or share books when book covers and each page will need to be wiped down after every used but they will however, be using their exercise books. Their teachers will not be collecting them in or marking them. There may be opportunities where children can self-mark.

#### ***What about the children of critical workers?***

The provision for the children of critical workers is **childcare** and **not teaching and learning**. There might be an opportunity for them to carry out some of their home learning depending upon the resources we have available.

#### ***What about children not in school?***

We will have a number of teachers who will not be teaching face to face in school. We are looking at ways in which these staff can support home learning but it is unlikely that we will be able to maintain it at the same levels that children have experienced over recent weeks and months but we still hope to ensure a good standard of provision that is within our means. .

#### ***When will children start?***

As advised, we are taking a cautious, phased approach to the wider reopening. By having a staggered introduction of groups we hope to learn lessons and be able to quickly implement the findings of these lessons.

#### **Staggered Introduction:**

##### **Monday June 1st**

We are going to use June 1<sup>st</sup> as a staff training day to ensure all members of staff have a common understanding of the processes and procedures in place to make the school as safe as possible for everybody in it. Therefore, I am going to ask that **no children come into school on June 1st**. If this

causes critical worker parents an unresolvable problem please can they contact school by email at [office@chorleystmarys.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:office@chorleystmarys.lancs.sch.uk).

From:

**Tuesday June 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Children of critical workers and the children in Nursery class can attend.

**Thursday June 4<sup>th</sup>**

The children in the above groups will be joined by children in the Reception class.

**Monday June 8<sup>th</sup>**

Children in Y1 will start so that all three classes and critical worker children are in.

**Breakfast and After School Clubs**

In order to maintain the integrity of the 'bubbles' and prevent children and adults from different bubbles mixing, it is with regret that we are unable to run the Breakfast and After School Clubs during this initial re-opening period.

**Friday afternoons**

In order to ensure that the school receives a deep clean at the end of each week we are closing early on Fridays after lunch.

I will write to you again with further details of our plans tomorrow.

Kind regards,

Patrick Smyth

Headteacher