



Saint Thomas More R.C. Primary School

Headteacher, Joanne Butterworth, Deputy Headteacher: Anna Quigg
Assistant Headteacher: Sarah Dodd

14th May 2020

Dear Parents, and Carers,

Coronavirus update – Phasing children back into school in June 2020

I hope you and your loved ones are all keeping safe and well.

I am sure you are aware by now that the government are seeking for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to be phased back into school life on 1st June, but for us this would be 8th June, with a longer vision of the whole school back in July.

As Headteacher, I want nothing more than to be able to welcome children back to school but with the best intentions of managing safety, well-being and academic achievement there will be barriers within school. This is the reality of what school faces:

- There are 150 children alone in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. According to the guidance we need groups of 15 (the LA have challenged this stating this number is too high, it should be 10) therefore we would need 10 classroom spaces, 10 teachers as a minimum. This does not include siblings who are expected to stay at home as they are not in any of the phased year groups and parents who are not key workers.
- Add to this the key worker provision which is approximately 30 who will need space (currently using Hall, plus 2 classrooms)
- A number staff, with children in other schools, may also be without childcare;
- The school would be asked to fulfil three functions: childcare for key worker children, education in school for some year groups and support home learning for those not in school;
- The physical limitations of the school building.
- Also the situation in school still remains the same **we had to close due to health and safety issues, these included reduced staff due to: - shielding, self-isolation or social distancing criteria, including no caretaker**

As you can see this is widely problematic. I also have to be honest and transparent with families regarding the following points:

- It is very hard for social distancing within a school setting to be adhered to. By their nature children want to be near each other and play together, which I expect will be more felt as they haven't seen each other for a while. We are a school that promotes an ethos of love and warmth and we treat the children as if they are our own. It would be very hard for any member of staff not to comfort a child when they are upset; not to lead a child by the hand when they need guidance; not to help them with their learning when they need it. It is also extremely hard to tell children not to touch one another and play 2 metres apart as this is the children's natural instinct as it is for school staff. The government guidance states that in society social distancing must be adhered to. However, in the latest guidance for schools it states: "early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff." This of course increases the risk of contamination.
- The documentation also states that Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) **DOES NOT** need to be worn by adults **only** when dealing with intimate care of pupils or staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable or those who are waiting to be collected if they show signs symptoms.
- Also, there may be times when it is not possible to have a class teacher with the groups of children but teaching assistants will be utilised in exchange. This will be sporadic and a last resort but it will ensure a consistent routine for the children. This will be managed effectively and all staff will be fully briefed on the schools priorities and measures. There may be days where staffing does not allow for certain groups of children to attend as it would be deemed 'unsafe.'

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Having said this, we will endeavour to overcome these barriers and provide for the children in the best way we can, therefore we will open for those children in Nursery, Reception, Year1, Year 6 plus key worker provision **if you wish your child to return to school**. Information from the government explains that there will be **no penalty for parents not sending their child into school**. Ultimately, they have left the decision with parents. If every child in Nursery, Reception, Year1 and Year 6 plus other children return to school this is something that I cannot 'safely' accommodate for staff and children, therefore a priority list will have to be established. I urge you to complete the Survey Monkey so this can be planned for and all families 'in need' can be accommodated. Unfortunately, for some parents, they are forced to send their child(ren) to school due to their key worker occupations. The Survey Monkey link is below, this will be available for 2 days as we need to send our plans and risk assessments to staff, governors and LA, therefore need a clear picture of those who want their children to return to school.

I have provisionally outlined a basic plan below how a phased school return can be implemented. Currently, schools are in liaison with the DfE, LA and other schools to develop these plans. When more plans are established over the weeks, this will be communicated in more depth as we will hopefully know the number of children entering the school building.

During the phased return of children into school, the priorities will be:

1. The well-being and safety of the children;
2. The well-being and safety of the staff and adults.

Once children return to school, we will interpret their experiences so far and work to eliminate any anxieties the children may have returning to school. Class teachers and all staff members will be on hand to reduce anxieties for your child.

Measures put in place to manage positive well-being:

- Programme in place on managing feelings and well-being;
- Safe spaces for 'talk time' with members of staff;
- Quiet zones where children can reflect on their own and have private space if needed;
- Small groups / 1 to 1 sessions established to aid children closely affected by COVID-19;
- There will be a reduced working timetable for the children with a focus on reading, writing and maths through fun project work;
- Lack of motivation and fatigue will be sensitively managed.

Measures put into place to enable the safety of the children:

- Smaller class sizes of children will occupy a single classroom at any one time.
- Children will have scheduled toilet breaks and rest breaks including dinner to ensure social distance measures can be followed as far as possible. By ensuring this children will not meet on the corridors therefore enforcing the 2m social distancing rule.
- PPE equipment will be used by staff in circumstances deemed appropriate such as dealing with first aid incidents or intimate care.

Due to the prolonged absence from school, the children will have grown in so many ways, therefore for parental ease, the children may come to school in their own clothes. The children DO NOT need to wear uniform but can do if you so wish. Please ensure your child wears sensible footwear and appropriate clothing for school and the weather.

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As time moves on we will then look to address the gaps in learning that the children will have from their forced absence from school. This will be in a few weeks' time and a timetable will be sent so you are aware of the expectation from the children.

Further details regarding a phased return to school will follow once parents have liaised their views with school.

If there is a phased return to school for any children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, it will commence on **Monday 8th June** in line with the half term holiday. We will be open over the half term holiday (Tuesday 26th May to Friday 5th June) for key worker and vulnerable children only.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and I wish you all health and happiness.

Please look after one another and stay safe,

Best wishes,

Mrs Butterworth

Survey Monkey link

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6XBRYKK>

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