

The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Miss K J Hannah BA(QTS)



21st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Letter about the plans to reopen school to more children

I wanted to write to keep you up to date with how the school is proceeding following the announcement from the Government to partially open. As I am sure you are aware, the UK Government has released new guidance around the country's Coronavirus recovery strategy. Central to the Government's plans for recovery is the expansion of the number of pupils returning to primary school settings. The latest guidance for parents can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>.

The school has actually never been shut! We are taking all of the key worker children and are still fortunate to have enough staff to cover this. We will continue to be open for key worker children during half term. I am so grateful to our staff for volunteering to work their holidays with no payment to enable us to continue to support our families during this very difficult time.

The main headline to be taken from the latest guidance is undoubtedly the return to school of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 'from the week commencing 1 June 2020 at the earliest'. The Government have made it clear that this will only happen on the proviso that the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing and the enabling programs set out in the Government Road-map are operating effectively. For this reason it is important that you understand that any plans outlined in this letter are subject to change depending on the latest information and guidance that we receive from the Government. A final decision on the partial re-opening of schools is due to be made on 28/5/2020.

We are currently undertaking a risk assessment using the DFE guidance. It is apparent that social distancing is a great challenge in our school building where the classrooms are smaller than average and the corridors are quite narrow. I hope you agree with me that is so important that we keep our children safe and well.

Since the announcement and over the course of the next two weeks, we will be working tirelessly to try and meet the Government's requests. As you can imagine when planning and organising the possible return of 4 year groups plus the Key Workers' children (in the first instance), there will be an almost endless list of steps to consider. Some of the considerations recommended by the Government include:

- organising small class groups
- organising classrooms to maintain space between seats and desks
- staggered break times (including lunch)
- drop-off and collection times
- organising pick-up protocols that minimise adult to adult contact

Along with our Governing Body, we have come to the decision that the way forward for us is to open to the children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 on a part-time rota basis from Monday 8th June. The children will be in school Monday – Thursday on a weekly rota system. **This means that they will only attend school every other week.** The school will be deep-cleaned on Friday, ready for the new group the following week – **no children will attend school on Friday.** These arrangements will be reviewed regularly and I encourage you to keep checking the school website for updates.

So that you and your children are fully prepared to return to school, please read the following information carefully; I hope it helps you with the incredibly difficult decision of whether the return to school is in the best interests of your child.

Nursery Children

We are inviting Nursery children back to school, in line with Government guidance but need you to clearly understand that the changes for Nursery children may upset them. The principles of dropping off / picking up will be the same as the rest of the school and we have prepared one of the Reception classrooms for them (please see photograph below). You are able to order a lunch from school and this may be preferable as if they bring their own lunch they must bring items that they can open easily without the help of an adult and everything must be fully disposable so that it can be thrown away at the end of lunch time. We are offering the same rota system as the rest of the school and no additional hours will be available during this time.

Children who are 'Shielding' or who are clinically vulnerable

Children who are shielding on medical grounds should NOT return to school. If your child is not shielding but is considered to be clinically vulnerable e.g. Brittle Asthma, we strongly urge you to contact your GP / consultant to ask their advice as, although Health and Safety will be a priority, **we can not guarantee social distancing in school**. If your child lives with someone who is shielding or clinically vulnerable, please seek advice as by returning to school, the risk of infection will increase.

Classrooms and layout

All 4 year groups returning to school will be using the main school building (the Nursery building will continue to be used for the children of Key Workers) and will be organised into small groups and allocated a classroom. **The children will not necessarily be in their own classroom or with their previous class mates**. The classrooms have had all unnecessary furniture removed to make as much room as possible for desks. All children (including EYFS) will be allocated a desk and will have to remain at the desk whilst in the classroom – **they will not be able to wander about the classroom or get any equipment and toys as they choose**. This is a very different way of working, particularly for children in Nursery and Reception who are used to the freedom of learning through play and free-flow and could be quite distressing for them. I have included photograph of one of the classrooms so that you can see how they are set out to maximise social distancing. Please be aware that the desks are not 2m apart but are as far apart as we can get them.



Curriculum

In school, we will deliver the elements of the curriculum that we have been sending home in the Home-learning packs – this will provide consistency for the children when they are not in school and mean that there is not a huge gap in learning between children who are in school and those who are at home. We will also complete RE, PSHE and PE as priorities. PE lessons will be very different as we will not be able to play contact / team sports – we will however spend time each day doing physical activity.

Break time and Lunch time

Break time and lunch times will be staggered to minimise social contact – children will only spend their breaks with the other children in their group and the staff looking after them. **Lunches will be eaten in the classroom** and there will not be an option for hot food. Children who are entitled to Free School Meals will be provided with a packed lunch and other children are strongly encouraged to order a meal from school so that nothing from home is being brought into school in the morning. Groups will have a rota to go outside for break and lunch times but this will be dependent on the weather; luckily so far this summer the weather has been lovely and we hope this continues! We will be allowing children to use the trim trail equipment and spraying it with virucidal cleaner after each use.

Drop-off and collection

Unfortunately, parents are discouraged from being on school grounds or gathering at the school gates so you will not be able to take your child to the door as you normally would. **All children will be dropped off at the main entrance on Farringdon Lane**; you are asked to queue (as you would at the supermarket) along the fence. A member of staff will be at the gate and will direct your child into school where they will clean their hands and make their way to class. You can drop your child off between 8.30 – 9.30. I understand that this will be very difficult for you and your child, especially if they are very young and can only assure you that we will do our best to settle them into their new classroom environments with their new teachers whilst trying to maintain social distance. At the end of the day (3.00 – 3.15 for all children), all children in school will be taken out onto the playground and put into family groups – socially distanced. **You will come to the back gate** (Moorside Avenue) and your children will come out to you (supervised by staff). You will not be able to collect the children of another family under current social distancing guidelines. Due to the restrictions around movement, **only 1 adult** will be able to drop-off / collect each family group and we urge you not to use public transport. Due to the drop-off being on Farringdon Lane, **no cars** will be allowed to park / drop off in this area. Year 6 will also have to be collected by an adult – nobody will be allowed to walk home alone so that you know they have maintained the correct social distance at all times.

Sickness

The rules around self-isolation are still in place so if a child is unwell with the symptoms of Covid, they must isolate at home for 14 days or until they have had a negative test (evidence will be needed). Should another person in the household display symptoms of Covid, they must isolate for 14 days. **We will send children who become unwell at school home immediately** and it is your responsibility to ensure that your contact details are up to date. If we have a confirmed case of Covid in school, the entire group will be asked to isolate for 14 days (including adults) and will not be able to return to school until the end of that period. We have been told that there will be testing available for all pupils although this is not yet the case.

Teachers and other adults working in school

Each week there will be a group of adults working in school, this will include a member of the office staff, a Senior Leader in charge and the teachers and TAs working directly with each group. **Children are, in effect, being allocated a new teacher for the remainder of the academic year** although the 'new' teacher will continue to follow the guidance of their existing class teacher.

Over the coming weeks, existing class teachers will be contacting anybody who does not come back to school to arrange a suitable way to say 'goodbye' before they move onto their next teacher in September. The same staff will work with the groups each week that they are in school although this may change should we be required to bring back further year groups. There will be some staff in school that never come into contact with the children e.g. kitchen staff and cleaners.

Hygiene / Cleaning

There are hand sanitiser dispensers at all entrances to the school and we will be encouraging everyone to use them as they enter the building. Each classroom has tissues, a lidded bin, soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser for use throughout the day. Staff will be cleaning the tables with virucidal cleaner and emptying the bin during the day. Teachers will be leaving windows open as much as possible to allow fresh air into the classrooms – this is not uncommon at this time of year!

Toilets

By limiting the number of children in school, we are also reducing the number of children accessing the toilets – each year group will be allocated a set of toilets to use and given times during the day to go to the toilets. This is to prevent children coming into contact with children from another group whilst they are at the toilets. Groups will be supervised and the toilets will be cleaned after each use. We will not be able to let children go to the toilet as freely as they did before but they will have the opportunity to go to the toilet and this should not be a cause for concern.

Bringing things to / from school

We want to limit the items that are coming to / from school. For that reason, **we are asking all parents to order and pay for a packed lunch for their child.** This also means that children will not be able to bring their 'home reader' bag to school and will not be taking home any reading books during this time. Children are never encouraged to bring pencil cases / equipment to school; all children will be provided with a set of equipment at the beginning of the week and will be expected to use it and look after it throughout the week. On Friday, the equipment will be cleaned and stored until they are next in school. Children will have access to drinking water throughout the day and so will **not need to bring a water bottle from home.** All cups will be thoroughly washed at the end of the day. Children should wear clean clothes each day so we will be encouraging the changing of shirts etc each night.

Free School Meal Vouchers

For the week that your child is in school, they will not be eligible for the £15 Free School Meals voucher as they will be provided with a school lunch. **The £15 will continue to be paid during the week that your child is at home.** If you choose to keep your child at home, the £15 will be paid each week.

Attendance

We have had contact from some parents informing us that they do not wish their child to return to school for the remainder of this term; that is an individual choice and you are entitled to it. **I should clarify that there are no penalties to families who decide not to send their children to school.** It seems this has worried parents. If you choose to keep your child at home, we will continue to support you as we have with home learning and welfare checks. If you inform us that your child is not returning to school, we will expect this to be for the remainder of the summer term. If your child does return to school, they will be subject to the usual attendance monitoring and you **MUST** call us if your child will not be attending on any particular day.

Year 6 Celebrations

We know how important it is for our children to mark the end of their time with us. Unfortunately, we will not be able to arrange the usual celebrations – production, party, Mass, assembly and shirt signing – that we would normally do this term. We already have plans to bring Year 6 back in the Autumn term for a celebration and to say a proper goodbye (and give them a hug!) when we are able to. **We will not let this milestone go unmarked.**

Next Steps

We are asking you to **complete the form** by following [this link](#) or scanning the QR code. You will be asked if you are planning to return your child to school and which weeks you would like them to attend (A or B). We need you to make your decision as soon as possible and will be calling anybody who has not completed the form **early next week.** This will help staff who do not know your children to prepare their lessons before school starts on Monday 8th June.



We recognise that the routines, lessons, environments and relationships that your children have come to know and love will be very different. We hope that you will take the time to prepare your own child for this. Going through these procedures with staff and rearranging classrooms this week has been one of the saddest experiences of my career and my heart breaks for the very young children who are not going to have the comfort and support that we have worked so hard to build up. Please know that we want to continue to support you as individual families and we urge you to contact us with any queries that you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miss K J Hannah'.

Miss K J Hannah
Headteacher