



21st May 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

Further to my brief message and questionnaire sent earlier this week, I want to expand on the proposed suggestion of schools beginning a phased return from 1st June, at the earliest.

Like many of you, we have been trying to work out what the changes outlined by the Prime Minister mean for us – for schools in particular. We cannot wait for our school to return to normal with happy children, enjoying their learning and the company of their classmates. It is clear however, that we must go step by step and above all, ensure that we are keeping everyone safe. We have studied the guidance documents very carefully and would like to share our initial thinking on this, so you are aware of what it says.

Education and childcare settings are already open to the children of key workers and vulnerable children. Children in these groups are now being encouraged to attend if they are not already doing so therefore numbers are likely to increase. Though the guidance advises small groups of no more than 15, we will initially be organising the children in to groups no bigger than 10 so that children can safely fit into each classroom allowing us to encourage and direct them to maintain 2m social distancing.

Schools are being asked to prepare for children in the F2, Year 1 and Year 6 to begin a return to school, no earlier than 1st June 2020. Schools returning will do so in line with their specific setting. Our proposed phased approach is as follows:

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| • Vulnerable and Key Worker children | Monday 1 st June. |
| • Year 6 | Monday 8 th June |
| • F2 | Monday 15 th June |
| • Year 1 | Monday 22 nd June |

This plan is subject to the Government's update on 28th May and their five key measures. If the infection rate increases, the phased return will be reviewed and changes made as appropriate.

The return to school has given schools on Wirral, and throughout the country, much to consider. Schools will be limited by how many groups of children they can accommodate in suitable spaces within the school building.

Schools will also be limited by the numbers of staff available. Staff who are shielding will not be able to return to school at this point and have been instructed that they must remain working at home. Some schools on Wirral will be greatly affected by this necessary measure.

The children's experiences will be different as school following government guidance. This means:

- ✓ children must be in small groups; they may well not be with their own class teacher or their friends or even in their own classroom. Though we would like to be able to group children according to their friends, due to the nature and size of the groups, this will not be possible. As I am sure you are aware, the staff will guide and support all pupils during their return to school to ensure they are happy within their respective bubble.
- ✓ The government guidance says that as far as possible, they will need to remain with the same group and the same adult while they are in school.
- ✓ Breaks must be taken in the same small groups, staggered so that the children do not mix in larger groups. As a result, playtimes and lunchtimes will need to be different than usual.

Schools will need to carry out additional stringent cleaning everyday so that when children leave, the spaces and resources that they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. This is already happening daily but as numbers of children in school increase, there will be more areas and resources to clean. Additional time for cleaning will have to be factored into any arrangements that we make for the return of more pupils.

We are instructed that all classroom items and resources that cannot be easily cleaned must be put away. Activities must be limited to things that can be cleaned regularly. In Early Years this may change the classroom environment the children are familiar with. For example, there would be no sand, water, playdough or dressing up clothes. We must avoid children sharing resources where we can and if they must share, we need to be able to clean equipment after each use.

So what does this mean for Woodchurch C.E. parents?

- Children of key workers and vulnerable children must continue to be accommodated first. Schools will then be able to see how many additional children they can care for dependent on spaces and staffing available. This clearly may mean that not all children in F2, Y1 and Y6 may be able to attend at once. We are looking carefully at this considering what provision we can safely offer. It will not be the same for all schools on Wirral – it cannot be as it will depend on the accommodation and staffing available in individual schools.
- In order to be able to allow as many children in the designated year groups to attend school, schools may offer places on a part-time basis or for a certain number of sessions per week.
- School will be different for children returning. The children need to understand that they may not be with their own teacher or in their own classroom as this may not be possible. Routines and systems will be unfamiliar and more formal than usual. They will however be well cared for and welcomed by the adult who is working with them.
- There will be staggered start and finishing times so that schools can try to safely manage this and ensure there is minimal adult contact. The times are as follows:
 - **Key Workers** and **Vulnerable** children to arrive between 8:20 and 8:50a.m. finishing between 3:20 and 3:40p.m.
 - **Year 6, who are not within the Key Workers and Vulnerable** group, to arrive between 9.05 and 9.20 a.m. finishing at 1:30 p.m.
 - **F2 and Year 1** times will be communicated nearer to the time of their start dates.
- If you have made the decision not to send your child back to school or still remain undecided, we ask that should this change you inform the school as soon as possible. We can only admit children into school on a Monday and therefore request that you provide school with enough notice.
- Parent who are key worker or have child is classed as a vulnerable child need to be aware of the following:
 - your child will be able to attend school each day regardless of your child care needs. If you do not wish to take up this full entitlement, please inform school of the days and times that you require.
 - If your child moves from this group their respective year group 'bubble' they must remain in this group and will not be able to return to the key worker/vulnerable child group. Please advise school of your preference.

When the time comes for some children to return, our school as at all schools on Wirral, will be doing everything we can to follow the guidance issued by the DfE to keep everyone safe and parents will need to help too:

- ✓ 2m distancing between adults must be maintained so must not be mixing with other households. Parents must not gather at the school gates when arriving or departing and must use the yellow markings as guidance.
- ✓ Parents will not be allowed through the gates and onto the school grounds. Should you need to speak to the school office, please telephone after 9.30a.m.
- ✓ Only one adult can accompany children to school. **All children must be** accompanied to and from school by an adult - this **includes Year 6** children.
- ✓ Children must wear clean clothes each day to school. Where possible we would encourage school uniform, but this is not compulsory.
- ✓ Children will be handed over at main gate where their **temperatures will be scanned** and directed to a **hand gel station** before continuing into the building and on to their designated 'bubble'.
- ✓ School will be able to offer a cold lunch for those who have school meals. For those who have packed lunches, we ask that this is brought to school each day in a suitable lunch container. Any lunchboxes left in school will be disposed of at the end of the day.
- ✓ All children must bring a filled water bottle to school as water fountains will not be available for use. Water bottles must be taken home at night, washed and refilled before returning. Any water bottle left at the end of the day will be disposed of.
- ✓ Children should not bring their school bags, pencil cases etc. into school.

These are challenging times for us all. Many of you will be anxious to get back to work but many will be worried about sending children back to school. School staff understand and share those anxieties for their own children and families. Here at Woodchurch C.E. Primary School, as well as in other schools in Wirral, we will do everything they can to respond to the guidance given by the government but will also be ensuring that we do this safely. If you feel the time is not right for your children to return, that is your choice. There is no compulsory education at the moment, and parents will not be penalised in any way for choosing to keep their children at home. Children who are at home due to them or a member of their family shielding, because their year group has not been invited to return yet or because of parental choice, will continue to be supported through 'Home Learning' and their experience will mirror that which is being provided in school (as best we can).

School is currently looking at an effective way to help the children to prepare for a return to school. This may be in the form of a short video presentation showing what it would be like coming into school each day and what classrooms and other parts of the school would look for each of the bubbles.

Further advice will be given from the Local Authority and the Department of Education and when are able to share further information with you, we will do this. You will also be aware that professional associations and unions have many concerns and they will be working at local level and national level to resolve these. Until then, the date of June 1st is not confirmed but nevertheless, we wanted to share the key points in the guidance we have been given clearly so that you also have time to think about this.

If you wish to read the guidance in full you can find in using the links below:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-andchildcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

If your child displays any symptoms, such a high temperature (anything above 37.5 degrees Celsius), sustained cough, loss of taste and smell or is in any way unwell you are advised to seek medical advice. Please do not bring them to school until safe to do so.

Apologies for the length and detail contained within this letter, as you are aware this is an unprecedented time with many questions being asked regarding how safe and secure the children will be in school. We have endeavoured to answer the questions being asked with regards to return to school and will continue to do so as the situation develops.

We would love nothing better than to have everything back to normal and to welcome your children back with open arms, but we are all in unprecedented times. Welcoming them back safely must be our priority and we know you would want this to be the case too.

Yours sincerely

B.McGregor

Headteacher