

Parent/carer update 2nd June 2020

Covid 19 – Welcoming back more pupils

The government has now made the decision that schools should begin preparing to welcome back more children. They have provided schools with comprehensive advice on how to make school as safe as possible for both the pupils and staff attending.

I'm writing to update you on our planning for wider opening for some, but not all, our children. We have been working closely with the local authority, which has asked us to share the following information with you:

'Council officers and Public Health colleagues have been meeting with school representatives and trades unions weekly for some time now with a focus on making safe and sensible decisions.

Council Officers and School Leaders are agreed that the wider opening of primary schools and academies will not happen before the 8th June, following the two week half-term holiday. Secondary schools, in line with Government guidance, will not begin their wider opening before 15th June.

Wider opening arrangements, times and measures put in place will be unique to each school so that they best suit the local circumstances and ensure a safe return for pupils.'

The Council has provided schools with detailed information to support national guidance and is helping us to further develop our understanding around cleaning and hygiene, social distancing and reducing contact, and other practical steps to reduce risks, so that we can implement protective measures to keep pupils, staff and the wider community as safe as possible. We have also received detailed information from Tameside Council's Director of Population Health, Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy.

Our plans for wider opening form a 'risk assessment' which has been shared with the local authority and advised on by their Health and Safety team.

For further information on the local response to coronavirus, local service changes and public health advice please visit www.tameside.gov.uk/coronavirus

I asked class leaders to speak to you recently in order to find out your views on returning your child to school. This has been extremely helpful and I would like to thank you for your openness. This ongoing communication is going to be essential as we move through the coming weeks.

Social distancing and regular hand washing

The greatest **expectation** is that we maintain social distancing and observe high levels of hygiene, in terms of frequent hand washing by everyone along with the cleaning of the building at the end of the day.

We know from our experience of running throughout the 'lockdown' with a much reduced number of children, that social distancing will be a big challenge for everyone. However, we must try to do our best, so I am putting in measures to help us as much as possible.

Smaller group sizes

We are limiting the number of children in class to a maximum of four, supported by a minimum of two adults. Every child will be in their usual classroom, and as much as possible, the adults will be those who have worked with your child this year. The offer will be for these children to attend school full-time, though the times of the day might be different for some.

Creating 'bubbles'

We are creating **'bubbles'** – each class will keep to their own room and there will be minimal contact between individuals in school. Every room is self-sufficient – it has wi-fi and printing facilities for learning, and children have their own resources in class.

Every room has access to its own toilet and has a wash basin or sink. Lunch will be brought to the room and children will eat in the room.

This is close to how we usually operate, and it is our hope that things will look and feel as 'normal' as they can be for our children.

There will be access to outdoors, but it will be carefully managed on a rota system and distancing will be put in place. We will also use the hall space and the food room, but not the art room, science room or the music room.

A challenge will be helping our pupils manage their feelings and emotions and reducing, as much as possible, the need for staff to have to hold children for safety reasons. Our experience over the last few weeks has shown that with reduced numbers of children in class and access to more space in school, we have been able to spot early signs of arousal

and quickly de-escalate and distract to avoid most situations building and a child entering 'meltdown' or becoming physical with others or themselves.

Yellow Zone as a 'safe space'

Therefore, in the best interests of everyone, and to ensure a safe and sensible approach to having more children in school, I am using Yellow Zone as a large 'safe space' for the younger children in Blue zone and Red Zone. This means we will have somewhere for them to go besides the SLA, where they can be helped to self-regulate with access to space and appropriate resources, and be managed as much as possible from distance.

This means that we will not be able to give Year 8 and Year 9 access to their classrooms, and so for phase 1 of our wider opening, these children will remain working at home.

We will be able to have up to four Year 7 children in school, because their base is upstairs, and we can create the same 'bubble' effect for them there.

Uniform

Children will be expected to attend in uniform, and this will be helpful to you because it means they wear the same clothes to school, and you can wash them at night, keeping the uniform separate from their casual clothes. This reflects one of the issues called 'cross contamination' where we put measures in place to try to avoid as much as possible the opportunity for the virus to be passed from place to place, and person to person.

For the same reason, please think carefully about what your child may want to bring to school. We ask where possible that your child does not bring anything to school, but I know we will need to make individual allowances for some. This is a conversation to have with your child's class leader.

Dropping off and collecting

We have devised a plan for the dropping off and collecting of those children coming to school. Anyone coming in a vehicle, whether it is a car or a taxi, will be given a parking bay and a time which we will ask you to stick to every day. Children should remain in the vehicle until they are called to come into school.

We are doing this to avoid groups gathering at the front door, and children moving together down the corridors to their classrooms.

If you come on foot, or your child rides a bike to school, you will be given a time to arrive.

Taxis will transport one child in a car or black cab, and two children in a mini bus, and escorts and drivers have been given guidance on how to clean the vehicles before and after use. They are all subject to a risk assessment completed by the local authority's Transport department.

Office and the reception area

Adults are not permitted inside the building and must remain at least 2 metres away from the front doors. Staff will be on hand to supervise the movement of the children.

If you need to speak to the office, please make sure you have contacted them beforehand, and understand that there are new rules regarding how the office will function. If in doubt, please phone the office to check. The office will also be contacting families where we know a plan needs putting in place eg. if you pay dinner money to school; if your child needs medication in school; if paperwork needs passing to home and to school etc.

All these things will be new to all of us, so please remember, be patient with us and help us to get things right with you.

Review, review, review...

Everything will be constantly monitored and reviewed. We have seven weeks until the end of term, and we do not know how things are going to unfold – we are planning as meticulously as possible to try to ensure successful outcomes for everyone, but we must be ready to respond to any change in circumstance. Children will continue to come to school only if we feel it is safe and sensible to do so.

We will continue to work closely with the local authority and to follow the government guidance as best we can.

Short on staff

Please be aware – Starting the 8th June I will not have all my staff back in work full-time. Some staff are at home shielding either themselves or loved ones. Other staff have children of school age, and are subject to their children's schools making provision for their children.

Phase 2 and beyond...

The plan allows for phase 2 depending on how things go, which will possibly see more children offered a place in school as we progress.

I have asked that we work with White Bridge College to create a transition plan for Year 9 before the end of term, and I am also looking at what we might be able to do on an individual basis for children in Year 8, to try and build some contact before the end of term.

We will continue to keep in regular touch and will continue to provide work for children working from home, giving you the option to access the work via 'Google Classroom' or by having paper copies sent home to you.

Chromebooks

If your child is returning to school and you have a school chromebook at home, your class leader will be in touch to make arrangements to return the chromebook and cable to school, as your child will need it in class.

Keeping the school clean

The school is subject to a full and extensive clean at the end of every day, and we have introduced additional spot cleaning in the day to keep handles, taps, work surfaces etc clean and wiped with disinfectant.

If someone feels unwell at school

If anyone shows symptoms in the day (high temperature, dry cough, loss of taste/smell), they will be directed to go to the conference room and isolated (with staff supervision using PPE equipment and keeping a 2 metre distance) and you will be contacted to come and collect your child immediately.

With testing now available for children and staff in schools, if your child is unwell, it will be important that you arrange to have your child tested and inform school of the outcome. The idea of the '**bubble**' is that if someone displays symptoms and is tested positive, appropriate action can be taken with the others in the '**bubble**' without it needing to affect the whole school. Public Health (England) is providing more guidance on this to schools in due course.

I am sure things will become clearer over time as we work towards creating our 'new' normal.

Your class leader will be back in touch in the coming days to confirm whether your child is part of the phase 1 group coming back into school full-time, and if not, to ensure you have our continued support and a supply of work to help kick off the next half term!

Best wishes,

Robin Elms