

BEDFORD ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are all keeping well.

I want to thank all of the parents who filled in the initial parent questionnaire I sent to you last week and also those that returned our phone calls and gave us an indication of who might return to school when it is safe to do so.

What follows is probably one of the longest letters I have ever written to parents in my entire teaching career. I make no apology for this as I feel it is vitally important that I give you as much information as I can in relation to our phased reopening at Bedford Road. I thank you in advance for taking time to read it.

Background information

I have now been able to gather information regarding the number of families initially wishing to send their children to school, as and when we reopen. I have also gathered information from the staff to gain a clear view of how many of them or their family members have underlying health concerns that would continue to shield and will not be returning to the school site at this time.

Furthermore, I have also discussed in full our plans for reopening with members of the school governing board and the school staff.

As I finalise these plans and we work towards adhering to the guidance that has been issued, it is important that I continue to update you with new information and help you to understand what school will be like for children. As I said in my previous letter, it remains the case that it is your choice whether to send your child into school at this time and there will be no penalties for non- attendance at school.

As the days have gone by since the announcement to reopen was made, I have become increasingly aware that school will not be school as you or I have known it to be in the past. I need to be open and honest with you; I want your families and child/ren to be safe, but I also want to try and protect my staff and their families too. Only by adhering to this strict safety guidance, can I hope to do this.

The government plans to begin to phase in more children attending school from, at the earliest, 1st June 2020. Given the level of planning and changes to the school environment that needs to take place, it will not be possible for all children in those year groups who have indicated that they would like a space to all return on 1st June. At this time the phased return applies to Reception, year 1 and year 6 only. Schools have to decide what is safe and manageable. I will not have enough staff who are able to physically come into school, to be able to do this in the manner the government has recommended and especially if we are to welcome more year groups into school at a later date in the summer term.

This is a summary of the advice that schools have been asked to follow:

Department of Education Guidance:

Who should return to school? (Planning Guidance)

- Primary schools are being asked to welcome back all children currently in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6.
- To support children's early learning, you should prioritise groups of children as follows:
 - primary schools - reception and year 1 before Year 6
- The government's ambition is for ALL primary school children to return to school before the summer for a month if feasible.

What happens if someone becomes unwell or there is a confirmed case of coronavirus within the setting (Protective Measures)

- When a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days.
- If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required.
- If a member of staff has helped someone with symptoms, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves
- Where a child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days.

- If other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (Protective Measures)

- Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended
- The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others.
- If a child becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- If contact with the child displaying symptoms is necessary, then disposable gloves, a disposable apron and a fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult

Shielding

- Adults who are clinically extremely vulnerable (those with serious underlying health conditions who have been advised by their clinician or through a letter) should rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. Staff in this position are advised NOT to attend work. (Planning Guide)
- Children and young people (0 to 18 years of age) who have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. We do NOT expect these children to be attending school. (Protective Measures)
- If a child or member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable), which includes those who are pregnant, they can attend school. (Planning Guide)
- If a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home. (Protective Measures)
- Clinically vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness (people with some pre-existing conditions) have been advised to ... work from home where possible. (Protective Measures)

Bubbles (Groups of Children)

- For primary schools, classes should normally be split in half, with no more than 15 pupils per small group and one teacher (and, if needed, a teaching assistant). (Planning Guide)
- Children should only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group should stay away from other people and groups (bubbles). If you can keep older children within those small groups 2 metres away from each other, you should do so. (Planning Guide)

- Ensure that children are in the same small groups at all times each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day, or on subsequent days (Protective Measures)
- Ensure that the same teacher(s) and other staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, these stay the same during the day and on subsequent days (Protective Measures)
- Ensure that wherever possible children use the same classroom or area of a setting throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day. You may want to consider seating students at the same desk each day if they attend on consecutive days (Protective Measures)
- Small groups of children should be supported by consistent staffing, and groups should remain as consistent as possible throughout the outbreak. (Safe Working)
- If there are any shortages of teachers then teaching assistants can be allocated to lead a group (Planning Guide)
- Where schools and settings have no alternative but to close, for example due to insufficient classrooms or spaces available in the setting or because they do not have enough available teachers or staff to supervise the groups, solutions might involve children attending a nearby school. (Planning Guide/ Protective Measures)

Day to Day Organisation

- Refresh risk assessments and other health and safety advice for children in light of recent government advice, identifying protective measures. Also ensure that all health and safety compliance checks have been undertaken before opening (Protective Measures)

Start and End of School Day

- Stagger parents' drop-off and pick-up, using protocols that minimise adult to adult contact (Protective Measures)
- Use signage to guide parents and carers about where and when they should drop off and pick up their children (Planning Guide)
- Ensure parents and carers are aware of recommendations on transport to and from school, which means reducing any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport where possible (for example, by walking or cycling to school) and avoiding peak times (Planning Guide)
- Tell parents that if a child needs to be accompanied to the education or childcare setting, only one parent should attend (Protective Measures)
- Tell parents and young people their allocated drop off and collection times and the process for doing so, including protocols for minimising adult to adult contact (Protective Measures)
- Make clear to parents that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the site (Protective Measures)

Cleaning and Hygiene

- Ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available. Where a sink is not nearby, provide hand sanitiser in classrooms and other learning environments contact (Protective Measures)
- Clean hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered (ensure sanitiser is available in every area) (Planning Guide)
- Clean frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach (Planning Guide)
- Consider how play equipment is used ensuring it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously (Protective Measures)
- Clean surfaces that children and young people are touching, such as toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, bannisters, more regularly than normal contact (Protective Measures)
- Ensure that all adults and children:
 - clean their hands on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
 - use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it') (Protective Measures)
- Ensure that help is available for children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently (Protective Measures)
- Consider how to encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition (Protective Measures)
- Ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day (Protective Measures)

Health and Safety (Protective Measures)

- Prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation
- Access rooms directly from outside where possible
- Consider one-way circulation, or place a divider down the middle of the corridor to keep groups apart as they move through the setting where spaces are accessed by corridors
- Stagger breaks to ensure that any corridors or circulation routes used have a limited number of pupils using them at any time

- Stagger lunch breaks - children should clean their hands beforehand and enter in the groups they are already in, groups should be kept apart as much as possible and tables should be cleaned between each group. If such measures are not possible, children should be brought their lunch in their classrooms
- Ensure that toilets do not become crowded by limiting the number of children or young people who use the toilet facilities at one time
- Stagger the use of staff rooms and offices to limit occupancy
- Reduce the use of shared resources by limiting the amount of resources that are taken home and limit exchange of take-home resources between children, young people and staff
- Organise classrooms and other learning environments maintaining space between seats and desks where possible
- Remove unnecessary items from classrooms and other learning environments where there is space to store it elsewhere
- Remove soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean (such as those with intricate parts)
- Use outdoor space for outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff

Our plan

As you can see the guidance list is long and it has inevitably taken some time to plan a way forward. However, an initial plan has been drafted and I wanted to share this with you. In drawing up the plan, the guidance has been taken into account and you will see that in some instances this has been a challenge to follow. I have no doubt that as we return to school and evaluate how things are going, changes will need to be made to the plan. For this reason I will not be able to share a long term plan.

Having considered the numbers that have indicated a yes to a return after the 1st June, the staff available and the government advice above, as well as the ambition to return all children before the end of the summer term, it is clear that there will be limits to what can be offered.

Each year group has been split into 4 groups; group a, b, c and d. If your child is in Reception, they will be placed in Ra, Rb, Rc, or Rd. If your child is in year 1, they will be allocated to 1a, 1b, 1c or 1d and similarly with year 6; 6a, 6b, 6c or 6d. We will try to ensure that where there are siblings in these year groups, they have the same sessions in school.

These groups will be your child's 'bubble' – these will have the same adults and children at all times. These groups can not be changed and it is possible that your child will not have

their own class teacher and /or TA for their bubble. The only change that may take place is the amalgamation of 2 bubbles if numbers in a bubble are particularly low. Having taken into consideration the sizes of our classrooms, bubbles will have between 10 and 12 children in each.

If your child has been in the key worker group or needs to join the key worker group, your child will be allocated a key worker bubble and will not join their peers in their year group.

Initially we will be offering your child two 2½ hour slots per week for each bubble. The times and days for these will be communicated to parents via letter and there will be no choice on which days or times can be offered, as we will need to ensure that we have staff who can attend for their allocated bubble.

If we are given the go ahead by the government, and our key worker numbers do not increase beyond our expectation, we will welcome back Year R no earlier than Monday 8th June, Year 1 no earlier than 11th June and Year 6 no earlier than 15th June.

At the end of the 2nd week, school will evaluate whether it is possible to increase the number of sessions that children can attend each week. In order to do this, we will need to consider if numbers are lower than expected or whether they are expected to increase as more parents may decide they wish to send their child to school. A careful evaluation of any changes needed to ensure safety will also take place. Parents will be notified of their child's sessions for the third and fourth week at the end of week two. Once we have reopened, any parents changing their mind and wishing to send their child/ren to school will need to give 10 school days notice so that a place can be allocated. Parents wishing to withdraw a child/ren will be able to do so, but we would welcome a conversation with you to see how best we can support your child to enable them to continue attending.

You may be wondering why the school has opted for half rather than full days. Our main reason is based on how we believe we can best offer the children some quality education in these final weeks of term.

I understand that for our youngest children especially and also for some of our older children, returning to school will present emotional challenges. The priorities at this time will be re socialisation into new school routines; speaking and listening, phonics and regaining momentum with learning maths and writing but in particular with early reading practice. It will also be important to build in time for exercise as some children will have had limited opportunities to exert themselves physically. Having considered this, I believe that the best way to achieve this is with more frequent shorter, focused sessions in school rather than less frequent longer sessions. We hope to be able to build up the number of shorter sessions offered as the weeks go by and if it is safe to do so.

For our year 6 pupils, we will not be able to carry out many of the usual end of term traditions such as trips, leavers' services and celebrations with parents. Transition visits to the secondary school will not be possible. It will be important that we build in time to work through this as this will inevitably be a source of sadness and anxiety. Teaching in year 6 will focus on readiness for secondary school and will concentrate on reading, writing and maths. For this reason again, shorter focused sessions in school will enable this to happen most effectively.

In addition to the above, we know that lunch time is the hardest time to keep children socially distanced and to keep the bubbles of children separated. When also factoring in that a number of our lunchtime staff are medically shielding, the school is simply not in a position to offer lunchtimes in school to the majority of children.

The practicalities of the plan and how we will keep everyone safe

Each bubble will have their own start and finish time. Parents must adhere to these start and finish times to ensure that social distancing can be maintained at drop off and pick up times.

Children in Year R and Year 1 will enter via the pedestrian gate at the front of the school and will be taken to the green gate to the playground. Parents and children must socially distance whilst waiting in line to hand over children to staff. No parent will be able to come onto the school playground with their children. The children will be taken to line up 2m apart and will be collected from their line by their bubble adults. There will be a one way system in operation for adults to leave the site and parents will leave via the vehicle access also on Bedford Road. Staff will be there to guide you.

To avoid congestion at the school gates, only one adult should drop off or collect. Children in year 6 will be encouraged to walk to school with an adult but should enter the school site alone, via the car park pedestrian gate. They will wait in the small area outside the classrooms, 2m apart. They will be collected by their bubble adult.

We ask that parents do not stay in the area around school gates, as other bubble groups will be arriving in 15 minute intervals. If any families arrive outside of the 15 minutes drop off time, then they will not be able to attend the provision for that day.

To have a place within the provision, parents and children will be required to sign a contract. If it is apparent that any of the conditions are not being followed and are therefore risking the health and safety of others, we will consider if the place can be continued.

Staff and children (where age appropriate) will be asked to clean surfaces continuously throughout the day. Hand washing will be regular and thorough for everyone on the school site.

Staff will wear PPE for First Aid if necessary.

Staff will make every endeavour that correct social distancing is maintained. The aim of social distancing is to avoid adult contact with children and between children. However, I am not able to guarantee that we can achieve social distancing and guarantee total safety in a school. We will continue to work as hard as possible to reduce the risks as far as possible, but the risk of physical contact will be there for your children and for school staff. Everyone within our school community has a role to play here and we ask parents to help us by reminding their children about the importance of washing hands and social distancing.

And finally

School will be a very different place for at least the rest of this summer term. Not all children will be with their friends. This is necessary so that any outbreak of the virus can be tracked and traced and all people who have been in the affected 'bubble' can isolate and be tested.

To keep children safe, there will be two adults with each bubble in KS1 and Reception. In Year 6 there may only be one adult in the bubble.

Some furniture will have to be removed from classes. A one-way system will be installed around the school, however, we will be accessing the majority of classrooms from the outside doors.

There will be new systems for use of toilets and cleaning.

There will not be any breaks (but there will be outdoor learning) and the only children staying for lunchtimes will be the children from the Key Worker and invited vulnerable group bubbles.

I am waiting to hear about the continuation of free school meals vouchers for those entitled to qualifying benefits. I do not expect these to stop for those not attending school.

For those free school meals children attending school, free school meals vouchers will be reduced to reflect the number of sessions in school and there will be packed lunch grab bags that will either be eaten at school in their classroom (afternoon sessions) or taken home (for those attending morning sessions). Children who are entitled to universal free school meals, in Reception or Y1 and attend the school provision, will be provided with a packed lunch to be taken home or to be eaten at school. Children in Year R and 1 will not be able to bring

their own packed lunch. Year 6 pupils not entitled to free school meals can bring a packed lunch or pay for a school packed lunch.

Staff will require full PPE for a child presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. We are trying to source this now. If we are not able to source this, it may delay our reopening.

Desks in year 1 - 6 classrooms will be 2 metres apart and a walkway will be included. In class, children will have to remain at their desks and keep to their own equipment. This will not be possible in Year R as this does not sit comfortably with our philosophy for early years education. Children in year R bubbles will inevitably play together and equipment will be shared. However, they won't have access to all the practical resources they would normally have because they all have to be kept clean to avoid infection. Young children learn by touching, doing, being with others and sharing, all of which will have to be limited as far as is possible.

For those children not in the returning year groups and those choosing not to return to school at this time, online learning will continue to be set. Please do contact your child's class teacher via Remind if you need any assistance. They are there, ready and waiting to help you.

What do I need to do next?

A letter will be sent out to all parents in years R, 1 and 6 who have already indicated that they require a return to school place. If you have since decided that you are not ready to send your child back to school yet, please also let us know by Thursday 28th May. If we did not receive a reply from you, we have assumed that you do not wish to send your child to school yet and a place will not be allocated at this time.

You will receive your place allocation for the first two weeks by Wednesday 3rd June.

The key worker / vulnerable group will remain as it is so there is no need to contact us to confirm your ongoing placement. Details of your drop off points will be shared with you soon.

Thank you for the time you have given to reading this, I appreciate that this is a difficult decision to make for your children and your families. I continue to have everyone's safety first and your child's education a close second at the heart of everything I do.

Take care and stay safe.

Kind regards

Lindsay Gould
Headteacher