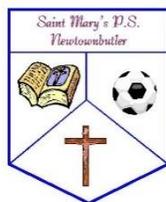


ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

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29th June 2020

Dear Parents,

Thank-you for working so closely with the school over the past 3 months. I am aware from teacher plans, pupil activity, discussions with parents, teacher feedback to work on Seesaw and the celebrations of achievement on our website, that while learning may have looked different, it certainly did not cease for your children during lockdown. The way in which your children have been able to work on, is a reflection of the support and encouragement which you have given them and the way in which you took time to collect and work through paper packs, asked for help when needed and how you linked in with the remote learning platforms. Thank-you for working with school on this.

I want to reassure you that governors, and staff have considered the measures which need to be put in place to enable a safe reopening of the school. Without question, the priorities upon return are the physical safety of pupils, staff, families and the wider community, through infection control coupled with a need to nurture the emotional well-being of pupils, following an unexpected and unprecedented interruption to their young lives.

As always we are very keen to ensure that we make the best decisions for pupils, staff and parents. Our recent parent survey indicates very mixed feelings, ranging between high levels of anxiety about a return, a desire for social distancing and good hygiene to be stringently applied and some who have few or no concerns about a return.

As you know our classrooms are undersized and we have a lack of additional resource spaces, (a significant factor in our school upcoming enhancement building programme). I have consulted with teachers and we are attempting to exhaust every possibility, with a view to bringing all pupils back to school as soon as possible.

In light of the quickly changing PHA and DE guidelines and the complexities around social distancing within limited space, we are planning a staggered return for the first 2 weeks, so that emotional support can be put in place alongside new routines and practices in the interest of safety. This approach will be reviewed towards the end of August and it is hoped, depending on the situation and guidance at that time, that after a settling in period, all pupils will return to full-time education.

The staggered return would be as follows:

Week beginning 17th August

Staff return to school after the Summer.

Week beginning 24th August

P7 will return to class fulltime, as recommended by DE.

P1 will also be invited in small groups during the week, with careful planning to make the point of separation from parents as smooth as possible.

Week beginning 31st August

Monday will be a Bank Holiday

Tuesday and Wednesday 50% of P1-6 come to school.

Thursday and Friday 50% of P1-6 come to school.

While there is an ongoing amount of uncertainty, I trust that this will give you some indication of the plan for a full return. I am also conscious that things change very quickly during this pandemic and at this point I am reluctant to plan further than for the first 2 weeks of term. It is however hoped that all pupils may be able to attend together from Monday 7th September. This decision would be made in keeping with PHA and DE guidance at that time.

There will be a number of new policy / rule changes to allow for a safe reopening. **The proposed health and safety plans are all COVID 19 dependent, they will be further refined and adapted as necessary. You will be kept informed of changes.**

Some of the changes will include:

A Bubble Strategy

Pupils will be kept in so far as possible, within 'bubbles', these are groups of peers and key adults. These groups will initially be approximately half of a class and will then be increased to whole class bubbles. Movement around the school will be limited in so far as possible and children will use only toilet facilities, playground areas etc which have been identified for their 'bubble'.

Arrangements regarding staggered drop-off and collection times.

Parents will be given an entry and exit allotted time prior to their child's return. Parents have already been asked to let us know via the school info email account, if they have specific requests regarding allotted times and these have been collated. Please note that we will do our best to meet these requests, however it may not be possible for all. We will as a priority, aim to accommodate family groupings.

We continue to await further information about the running of EA transport. To date we have only been advised that transport is likely to be limited, and this will inevitably impact upon our staggered entry and exit arrangements.

Parent Access

You will all be aware of the welcoming ethos which we have worked hard to establish and develop in St Mary's. Due to current restrictions, DE guidance and in the interests of the safety of all, parents will be asked to remain outside school grounds, unless specifically requested to enter, in exceptional circumstances. We ask that if parents wish to contact school that they telephone or email the info account and as always teachers will endeavour to speak to parents outside direct teaching hours. Likewise, we ask that absent notes etc be sent by email. Options for cashless payments are being investigated. Arrangements for collection of pupils for appointments etc during the school day, will be confirmed upon reopening.

Uniform

Uniforms should be changed daily and it is recommended that they are washed at 60 degrees. We ask that in as far as possible, pupils continue to wear uniform.

Items carried to and from school will be minimised, most likely just lunch and snack in disposable packages. Pupils will be required to bring a re-useable water bottle, a small packet of tissues and a small hand sanitiser (for personal use) on their first day back.

Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizing

The school will have arrangements in place to facilitate regular hand-washing and access to hand sanitising facilities. Systems will be put in place so that all pupils wash their hands at least 5 times during the school day, including upon arrival and before eating. **You could greatly help us by teaching your child to use the 7 step / 2 minute hand washing routine and respiratory hygiene as attached.**

In addition to classroom and toilet sinks, hand sanitizer dispensers will be placed on corridors, office, entrances and exits, to ensure that pupils and staff sanitize their hands regularly during the day as well as hand washing.

School & Class Cleaning

In addition to the usual daily cleaning routine, there will be a focus on frequently touched surfaces, which will be cleaned during the school day.

Procedure for anyone displaying signs of COVID 19

Pupils and staff will be required to **stay at home** if they have any of the recognised **symptoms of Covid-19** eg. high temperature, new and or persistent cough, lack or change of smell or taste.

Each morning staff and pupils will have their temperatures checked as they enter school. Anyone displaying symptoms at any time during the day, will be required to go home immediately. It is therefore crucial that parents **advise school of up to date telephone contacts**. This can be done via the school info email. An isolation area has been identified to accommodate for a short time, those displaying symptoms of Covid-19, until they are collected from school without delay.

PPE

At present the PHA and DE advice is that staff should not routinely wear PPE. Such equipment (eg: facemasks, shields, gloves and aprons) will be used on occasions when closer contact is necessary, eg: administering first aid, carrying out pre-agreed procedures to meet additional needs or working directly with reading groups.

One Way System

In so far as possible a one-way system will be in place.

Breaktimes

Breaktimes will be staggered so that pupils can eat and play within their 'bubbles'.

Lunch

It is expected that hot meals will be provided when school reopens. It is expected that the menu will be limited and disposable plates and cutlery will be used. These will be brought to classrooms and pupils will eat within their bubbles, in the classroom.

Please be reassured that we at St Mary's will do our best to keep your children safe and continue to nurture their various needs. We all look forward to a return to even near normal and in the meantime, we aim to make the new routines in school as manageable as possible for pupils, parents ad staff.

I hope that you all have a health and happy Summer holiday.

Take care and God bless,

Mrs P Kelly

Principal.

