

The Coppice Primary School

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Regarding school opening from June 1st for Years N, R, 1 and 6 children

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is good to get in touch with you all. I do hope you are all well and that coronavirus has not impacted too negatively on your circumstance. The school seems incomplete without the children; hardly a day goes by where we do not miss greatly our children and families, and all of us hope for a return to the 'old normal' as much as is possible, as soon as possible.

I apologise for the length of this letter but would urge you to read it all.

I am sure that you are now well aware that government has asked schools to plan to open, where possible, for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from June 1st. This is, however, still dependent on sufficient progress being made on a national level to contain the virus.

Firstly, I think it is important to be open and honest about the situation, ensuring that you are all as well informed as you can be to help with your decision making if you are a parent of a child in either of the above year groups.

We have put together a plan for a phased return of children to school. However, this is not without its drawbacks. Most importantly, we need to make the right decisions to ensure the safety of children, staff and parents. It goes without saying, as a school with a good track record of 'staying open', we do want the children back, but this cannot be at 'any cost'; we do not want it on our conscience that we have made a decision that has led to a tragic circumstance, so it is all about minimising risk.

It is important that you are all aware that, on their return, the school will be a very different place to what has been the norm for children - it will be a 'new norm', with a regime in place to ensure safety (most of which has been stipulated by the government).

We still think the message 'stay at home' is a good one (definitely for children with underlying health conditions or a vulnerable family member). Also, where it is working and easily managed, we would urge parents to still keep children at home, working online, so what places are available are prioritised for those who really need them. This is because we may have to restrict numbers to ensure safety (government have empowered schools to cap numbers accordingly).

All returning children will be working in a fixed small group (capped at 15 children). Consequently, to facilitate this, there is no guarantee that they will be with a teacher they know. Children will be receiving exactly the same learning, using the same online resources, as children at home (to keep teacher workload to reasonable levels). Children's movement around school, playtimes, drop off and pick up will be strictly managed, alongside appropriate social distancing.

Key worker parents/children to one side, given the above, we want parents (of children just in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6) to make the decision whether they actually want their child to return to school from June 1st. Having already gleaned some views from existing Year 6 parents, the consensus seems to be that they would prefer to continue with online learning at home (given the fact that the only other option is to return to school to a restrictive regime, not necessarily having contact with friends or being with a familiar

teacher). These parents felt that the children would not want to leave The Coppice with this situation as their final memory. It was also said that, once we are in a stronger position, Year 6 could all be invited back to meet up.

Similarly, we do have some issues around EYFS children (Reception and Nursery) where their normal 'play-based' learning will be much hampered given the restrictions we are under which do not lend themselves to this more practical, hands-on, type of learning where hygiene may be an issue. Therefore, although we will try our best with what is available to us, the curriculum in EYFS in school is very likely not to be as engaging as it usually is.

To reduce risk, the government have stipulated that children will be kept in small groups at all times with the same adult and with social distancing and limited movement around school.

I reiterate, if home-schooling is working for you, then you do still have the option to keep the children at home (the return of children is not mandatory at the moment).

If you are a parent of a Years N, R, 1 or 6 child, and you want your child to return to school then there are some stipulations:

- Your child must come in non-uniform (allowing clothes to be washed more frequently);
- Only one parent is allowed on site for pick up/drop off, and parents on site need to observe social distancing and have the responsibility of ensuring their children do the same;
- Pick up and drop off routines must be strictly adhered to (more information to come);
- Strictly no parking on site for any parent;
- There will be no face-to-face meetings with teachers whilst restrictions last;
- Each child in Year 1 to 6 to bring their own pencil case with stationary to use;
- Children will be eating in classrooms, so packed lunches only, please (a free packed lunch will be made available to eligible children on request);
- School will finish by 12.30 pm on Friday to allow for restrictions around statutory teacher planning time;
- If your child exhibits symptoms then they will be isolated and you will be contacted immediately (so you need to be readily available and ensure up-to-date contact details).

Please ensure that you complete the online Google form that can be accessed via the link (N, R, Y1 and Y6 parents only): <https://forms.gle/zrcud4pr1mCWSDtM7>

Obviously, for our key worker parents (who are on our list) we will still be supporting by making places available for their children.

I hope that you all appreciate the difficulty we are in with all of this, and that much of the above has been stipulated by the government. I thank you in anticipation of your understanding, accordingly.

Stay safe everybody.

Yours sincerely

Bill Heptinstall