

Dear Reception Parents,

It has been wonderful to welcome all the children back this week. Thank you very much for all the positive feedback we have received and for following our guidelines!

The Staff and I are really pleased with how everything is working. Most importantly the children have settled happily and are behaving beautifully, taking the changes in their stride.

Mrs Tynegate and Miss Mc Donald are leading the planning and timetabling so that *all* the Reception class groups are having the same provision. We are really fortunate that all our teachers are trained and qualified to teach the Early Years and that, above all, they are so committed to providing the best experience for all the children in such unusual circumstances. We are also fortunate in that we have been able to ensure experienced known LSA staff are supporting the classes. This has enabled us to split the small class groups in to two halves to enable even smaller groups. We are organising one group doing outdoor learning while the other half do their indoor learning and then we swap them over. We also have space in corridors and resource areas to continue this if the weather is poor. This week we have focussed on welcoming the children to their new or “different” classrooms and staff, helping them settle in to the school routines and expectations, personal, social and health education, PE and Literacy.

Next week we are re-introducing their maths, phonics and handwriting alongside this. Each week we will have a focus text. This week we have shared “The Koala who could” by Rachel Bright and next week we will be introducing two texts, one to inspire their maths learning and one to inspire their other learning across the curriculum.

We have provided the children with individual packs including pencil, colouring pencils, scissors, glue, whiteboard, tens frames, counters etc and also outdoor equipment including their own bats and balls, skipping ropes, hoops, bean bags etc. We are allowing each class group to use climbing equipment and some construction toys (which we are washing regularly), but these are not shared across groups. During the day each small class group or “bubble” can interact freely within this group. We are not expecting children to remain 2 m apart or not to play with friends. Within the class “bubble” normal interaction can take place as this is a necessary part of their learning.

We have, however, reduced the risk of spreading germs by providing individual equipment and reducing the amount of equipment being shared. We are staggering break times to ensure we manage the groups using the toilets. We are also ensuring frequent hand washing and cleaning of surfaces in between learning sessions. The separate class bubbles do not have contact with each other except when they see the other half of their class in the lunch hall. During lunchtime a maximum of thirty children are in the hall spread apart with only five children on each shared table.

I hope this provides a picture of how it is working in school and allays any fears about unnatural social distancing being enforced between the children in their class bubbles.

Entering and exiting the school site

Thank you very much for respecting our staggered drop off and pick up arrangements as well as our "one way" system. This has reduced the risk of large groups of you gathering together and ensured a smooth start and finish to the day. Please may I ask you not to arrive too early on site as this does mean groups are gathering while waiting. Please try to arrive at most 2-3 minutes before your class opening time to minimise your time on site and to enable us to ensure your safety through social distancing.

Sunny weather

We have been so fortunate with the weather, particularly as the children are benefiting from a lot of outdoor activities. Please can you ensure you apply sun-cream to the children before the start of each day and ensure that your child has a named hat with them every day. Please also send in your child's named water bottle if you have not done so already. Thank you!

Staff news

Mrs Tynegate is keeping well although she is missing all the children and staff. She is working hard on the planning at home and communicating with me and the other staff.

Mrs Hicks has, unfortunately, been asked to self-isolate by the hospital as she is due to have an operation for carpal tunnel syndrome in her hand during the next fortnight. I know you will join the staff in wishing her well and a good recovery following the operation.

Thank you once again for all of your support and encouraging feedback. It has been a pleasure to enable our Reception children's return to school.

With very best wishes,

Carol Rusby