

Dear Parents,

As promised I am writing to provide further information about the phased return to school for some of our children. I received the full Department for Education guidance on Monday evening and on Tuesday met virtually with other Head Teachers and our Leadership team to clarify as many details as possible about how we are going to manage the return to school in the safest way we can for our children.

The Prime Minister's speech on Sunday did not include all of the detail which School Leaders required or that might be pertinent to the different kinds of schools and settings which children attend.

Although there is guidance for parents on the Gov.uk website I have attached a section of the *school's* guidance material so that you know the framework we are having to work within and so that I can be completely transparent in my communications with you all. Do be aware, however, that ***the information and guidance is constantly being updated*** and that our planning may need to change if the guidance changes or if there is a deterioration in the impact of Covid 19.

Department for Education Guidance from 12th May

First of all, Schools have been told that **children should be in a class group no greater than 15** children. If you calculate how two thirds of the school (up to 180 pupils from year R and 1) can be spread across nine classrooms you immediately realise that a class size of 15 will not work in the Infant School context. In the guidance I received on Monday, (a section of which is attached to this letter), it was made clear that for **Infant Schools, only Reception Children** should return to school in this first phase on **June 1st**, (subject to the data concerning the virus).

In **Primary Schools** which cater for year R to 6, year one and Reception children make up a smaller proportion of the whole school, so three year groups can return and make up less than half the overall population. In **Infant schools**, two year groups make up two thirds of the population and so infant schools would neither have the space nor sufficient staff to organise this as required.

I am sorry that this is not what was indicated by the first announcement by the Prime Minister and was only communicated late on Monday to schools. **To be clear: Only Reception children are included in the first phased return to Infant Schools on 1st June.**

Year One and Two Children at Infant Schools

These year groups will **remain at home** for now **unless** they are children of Critical Workers or are vulnerable. We will still provide online learning materials each day for them. It is the ambition of the Government that **all Primary Aged children** should return to school before the Summer break, again dependent on the course of the virus. As a staff we would very much like to see **all** of the children! In particular we are hoping to see our year two children to be able to support the transition to year three. We must, however, follow the Department for Education

Guidance and ensure that we can manage the number of children in school safely. Teachers will continue to provide on-line learning materials for year one and two children and continue to communicate via the emails we have set up.

Y1@orchard.surrey.sch.uk Y2@orchard.surrey.sch.uk

Questions and Concerns

I know that you will all have many questions and concerns so have set out some key questions and answers below. **Our main priority, however, will be to welcome the children back to school and to provide a safe, welcoming, enjoyable and friendly environment. We want to make it as “normal” as we can in these extraordinary circumstances.** We know that they will not have had a school routine, seen their friends or even their wider families. Some of the children will feel anxious or upset by what has been happening and above all we want the children to feel reassured by their back to school experience. We will have to put many measures in place but these do not mean that our relationships with the children have changed.

How will school be organised for our Reception Children?

- We will form 6 classes of no more than 15 children in each class, each led by a qualified teacher **AND** supported by a Learning Support Assistant (LSA). (2adults to 15 children)
- Each new class group will be **half of an existing class** so the children will know each other. Class groups will be mixed with as even as possible numbers of boys and girls and thought given to existing friendships.
- Children with EHCPs will continue to have additional support from the LSA staff usually allocated to support them.
- We are ensuring that the children will be with their normal class- based staff, either their class teacher or class Learning Support Assistant, with a second member of staff.
- We will ensure, as far as possible, that the children will be with the same staff every day to ensure consistency, routine and feelings of security.
- School hours will be 8.45am until 3pm but each class group will have their own drop off and pick up time within these hours

How will social distancing and hygiene be managed for the children?

It is clear from the DFE guidance that it is not always possible to keep young children 2 metres apart from each other or from their teachers and we cannot pretend that this would be the case. However, we are planning in detail to reduce risk and will implement a range of measures including:

- Staggered playtimes so that no large groups are together.
- Staggered drop off and pick up times (see below).
- Staggered lunch times and children eating in different areas so no large groups together.
- No assemblies.
- Much reduced use of class group carpet times.
- Timetables which enable children from small class groups to use the toilets at different times.
- 1:1 and small groups of children with the teacher or LSA rather than carpet times with all 15 sat together.

- We will use a number of outdoor areas around the school for some of the children's learning time.
- Staff will oversee children washing their hands at many points throughout the day- when they come in to school, after break, before lunch, before they go home and following going to the toilet.
- We will provide children with a small pack of their own equipment to keep in school, eg pencil, maths apparatus, etc.
- We will be cleaning surfaces and equipment in between learning sessions.
- Several boxes of tissues and hand sanitisers will be available in all classes.

According to The Department for Education Guidance the wearing of masks and PPE is not recommended for children or staff in schools. Only staff who are providing intimate care will wear PPE.

What will the curriculum be?

- We will teach reading, writing, maths and phonics alongside providing important Personal, Social and Health Education, promoting emotional literacy, and enabling children to talk about their experiences and feelings. We will use the outdoors to a greater extent for learning and play.
- It is not possible to teach the full curriculum at the moment and the legislation and guidance from the Government fully supports this.
- Reading will take place in school but individual reading books **cannot go home** and be returned due to the risk of contamination.

What will parents need to do?

- ***Only one parent/carer can bring or collect each child or twins***
- Each class group of Parents will be provided with a start time and pick up time which will differ from the other class groups by 5 minutes.
- Parents/Carers will need to come and leave immediately and not gather with other parents.
- We will ask you to use one entrance for arriving at school and one exit point to leave the school to create a one- way system
- Look out for further communications providing further details
- **Stay at home** if you or your child have any **symptoms of coronavirus**

What about the provision for children of Critical Workers and those who are vulnerable?

- ***We will continue to have a small class led by two part time teachers sharing the week***
- This class is in addition to the six small classes of up to 15 for Reception children
- ***This class group will not be allowed to be more than 15 children and will be made up of Year One and Two children who are in the above category***
- The provision will continue to match the online provision for the children in year one and two at home.
- These children will be heard read and will have the 1:1 and small group work with the teachers
- This provision will continue through the half term break if there is sufficient demand from parents who need it.

Do we have to send our children back to school?

- The Department for Education has advised that schools “strongly encourage” the attendance at school for the designated year groups in this first phase of returning to school
- There will be no fines for non- attendance.
- It would be extremely helpful for us to know as soon as possible which Reception children will be returning on 1st June for our planning. We will be sending out a survey to you very soon to ask you to provide this information anonymously.

What else do we need to know?

- ***The staff and I would like you to know that we have been very grateful for all of your support during the past few weeks, particularly as we know that this has been a very challenging time for everyone.***
- We would also like you to know that we are working hard to ensure the children have the best care and provision we can organise in the circumstances and according to the latest guidance.
- Your questions and concerns are welcomed and we will provide further detail about the class groups, pick up and drop off times once we have finalised these.
- *The children’s return to school is dependent on the most recent data concerning the virus. It will be confirmed nearer the time. Arrangements and plans may change.*

I will write to you again in the next few days and include a survey link.

With very best wishes and renewed thanks to you all for your support and co-operation,

Carol Rusby