



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Kale Road, Erith, Kent DA18 4BA
Telephone: 020 8310 7311 Fax: 020 8312 1017
www.sjf.bexley.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Sarah J Griffin BA (Hons) MA (Hons) NPQH

1st June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure that you will be aware of the latest Government announcement regarding the gradual reopening of schools from 1st June, along with the vast amount of speculation and commentary that has been circulating in the press following this announcement.

I know that many parents have expressed serious concerns regarding the potential return to school and hope that this letter addresses some of these immediate concerns and questions.

Firstly, I think it is important to note that the first stage of reopening is intended to be a 'controlled phased return of some children from 8th June, at the earliest'. The year groups indicated in Government guidance are Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

I would also like to stress that staff want nothing more than to be able to return to school and get back to normality; the staff of SJF are dedicated and hardworking and it has been incredibly difficult to be away from the routine, structure, joy and immense satisfaction that we get from the day to day contact with our amazing young people, but we must ensure that this return does not jeopardise the safety of children, families and staff.

The reopening of school is an operational decision that will consider the Department for Education guidance, Local Authority advice and the context of our school. There is not one size fits all approach to reopening and each school is likely to approach this in a different way. This decision has been made by the leadership team, along with the Governing Body of the school.

A full risk assessment has been carried out. The risk assessment helped us determine whether or not it is safe for pupils and staff to return to school, and which pupils will begin first in our controlled phased return. From the 8th June we will bring back children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 - alongside siblings, Key-Worker children (who have been attending since March) and our Vulnerable children.



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In the current circumstances any return to school will undoubtedly be very different to what we recognise as 'normal school' and there are many factors that will need to be considered when carrying out the risk assessment and planning:

- 'Lessons' will not cover new learning so as not to disadvantage any pupils not in school
- Timetables will need to be adapted, with potentially staggered start and finish times
- Class sizes will be reduced; children will be placed into 'bubble' groups who will stay together all day, every day, to prevent mixing to enable effective tracking and tracing
- There will be supervised handwashing and comfort breaks allocated throughout the day
- Children will not be permitted to bring any items from home (except a water bottle and packed lunch which must be in a small packed lunch bag)
- They will be given a small plastic bag containing their learning resources which will remain in school
- If a child or adult within a bubble shows symptoms and/or tests positive for COVID-19, the whole bubble will need to self-isolate for 14 days
- Children are unlikely to be in their familiar classroom or with their familiar adult/s
- The children will attend 1 week in three - so 1 week in school and 2 weeks home learning
- The children will attend 4 days a week - Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday and Thursday
- School will be closed on a Friday for cleaning - preparation for the next cohort of children
- We will review behaviour policies to reflect new rules and routines necessary to reduce risk - children who are unable to adhere to these new rules will not be allowed to remain in school
- Strict social distancing will be maintained throughout the school; this will include the yard and entrance
- Parents will not be allowed onto the school site during the morning drop off and social distancing will still apply outside the school gates (communication with school must be via phone or email)



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- Parents will be permitted on the school site to collect their child(ren) at the end of the school day and social distancing will still apply
- Children will have the opportunity for outdoor play but this will be in within social distancing guidelines and no equipment will be used
- Each bubble will eat together in their allocated room - children will need to bring a packed lunch
- Additionally, we will need to ensure that there is a plan in place should we be unable to maintain adequate staffing levels due to illness or self-isolation.

Your input into this planning was extremely important and helpful. I completely understand that many parents will not want to send their child back to school at the moment and will be concerned about the implications; be reassured that, should you decide not to send your child back you will not be penalised and your child's attendance will not be affected. These are exceptional circumstances.

We will, of course, continue to provide emergency care for children of critical workers, our vulnerable children who have been with us from March and provide ongoing support for children still at home using our online platform.

I recognise also that many parents are concerned about their own financial and job security and the pressure to return to work from employers. The message from the Government still continues to be 'work from home' if you are able to do so and I would urge you to speak to your employer should you have concerns around this area.

Businesses have been provided with significant financial support to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged or discriminated against during this pandemic. This means we cannot accommodate requests for childcare of all children - we have to keep the numbers in each class at a maximum of 10 to meet social distancing requirements.

I also fully appreciate that even a phased return will still create difficulties with childcare but school is unable to support everyone with this - we are following guidance from the Government and are seeking ways to allow every child the opportunity to return to school before the summer holidays. We are in an uncertain time and the safety of everyone will determine the decisions we make.



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A second letter will be posted to the families of children eligible to return to school in our stage 1 controlled phased return. That letter will explain in further details the next steps. I know that this is extremely difficult for families. School staff are in a similar position and we fully understand how stressful this is.

This is only the beginning of our gradual return to normality, there is a long way to go, many questions remain unanswered and we may face further lockdowns and/or partial closures.

Further information will be provided in due course. Please work with us as we move forward and always remember that safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and staff rests at the heart of all decisions that we take.

With very best wishes

Sarah Griffin
Headteacher

