



BROAD CHALKE C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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19th May 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

Possible return to school for certain year groups

Following on from my newsletter last week about the possible return to school for certain year groups (YR, Y1 and Y6 at the earliest from **Monday 1st June**) we then had the further surprise announcement last Monday that the government's 'ambition' was that all year groups should return to school for the last 4 weeks of term which would mean Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5 returning from **Monday 22nd June** (all dependent on the scientific advice and conditions being met).

Schools do not get any advance indication of these plans by the government so we only find out what the plan is at the same time as it is announced to the nation. There has obviously been a great deal of media speculation about this plan, some of it extremely unhelpful. Many schools in Europe are returning although it remains difficult to make clear comparisons due to a number of factors, too many to list here. Thankfully, Wiltshire has so far remained statistically **a reasonably safe place to be**.

Headteachers have been asked to **make a plan** and that is what I've been busy doing with input from teaching staff and governors. It will also need to be a flexible plan; gradually working towards a new normality with, in the words of our Prime Minister, 'baby steps' to keep us all as safe as possible.

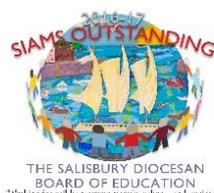
The government has also said that from June 1st, "all children and young people eligible to return to their settings will have access to testing, if they display symptoms, as will any symptomatic member(s) of their household" and this would enable children and staff "to get back to school if they test negative, and if they test positive a test and trace approach can be taken". "Where a setting has a positive case, Public Health England will advise on the appropriate course of action, and the **relevant group of people with whom the individual has mixed closely**, should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days."

There is nothing I would like more than to have us all back together but I have to be honest with you and explain that in this plan **school will not be the same as you and your children remember because the government plan relies on minimising contact**. The government guidelines mean that we have to make changes to help to keep you, your children and the staff as safe as we can, should all the conditions be met, to open schools in the first instance to YR, Y1 and Y6. It's also worth mentioning that in effect we will have 4 'classes' to accommodate as the children of keyworkers are a 4th class who will need their own staff and spaces both indoors and outside.

My guiding principle behind how I am proposing we do this is 'children first'. By this I also mean that unfortunately it may not suit your work patterns or help parents to get back to work to start with. My main concern is about getting this right for the CHILDREN and making this TRANSITION sensitively whilst still taking on board government advice about how school life has got to change.

OUR APPROACH

- With 3 year groups being a maximum of 86 children plus the keyworker group the only way we could manage to open on June 1st is to either only have certain year groups in and leave whole year groups out completely (the government has said that we can do this and that it is Y6 who would NOT be the priority) OR we have the children from all 3 of these year groups in school on a part-time basis.
- We have decided to take the 2nd approach and have all 3 year groups on a part-time basis, certainly to start with. Plus keyworkers' children on a full time basis if needed.



- We have to go gradually from only having 12 children in school to having much larger numbers. Therefore, the children will **not be back full-time** in the first instance and this will halve the potential number of children in school and allow us all to adjust and make sure we can keep the children, the staff and the parents as safe as we can.
- By having the children in small groups we will first of all be able to help them to adjust emotionally to being back in school. Some children will be very excited; others may be anxious and possibly confused. By having a part-time approach in the first instance, we can help your children to gain confidence and feel safe.
- Schools have been told to split each class into 2 groups of 15, 1 group taught by a teacher and 1 by a TA/TAs. If we have our children in on a part-time basis to start with, we can split these groups down again to 7 or 8 children in a classroom, to help with social distancing and to give them more attention (These numbers are more in line with how this has been done in Denmark where the younger children attend school mornings only).
- However, the 2 groups of 15 (per class) should not mix so in the 1st instance and in line with our 'baby steps' approach we can keep the groups separate by using the part-time approach which we will review according to demand.
- By having smaller groups we will be able to concentrate on the well-being of the children. We will also endeavour to work to catch up on key elements of the curriculum which form the building blocks for all other learning. There will be a focus on reading, writing and maths but we will also try to use our wonderful outdoor areas as much as possible, but we have to keep the 4 'classes' apart.
- We will split the children across 6 classrooms leaving the central area and one other classroom for the children of keyworkers which could be a further 20 children.
- We may be able to review this approach depending on the numbers we have coming back to school. But we feel it is best to start like this with **WEDNESDAYS** not being available (except for the children of keyworkers).
- Wednesdays will be used by the staff for the extra time needed for cleaning and planning so each class would get 2 days a week of teaching in school each week in the first instance but we will keep this under review.
- If by June 22nd all 7 classes are allowed to come back, we may still have to operate a part-time system if the government recommendation is still that children are kept in groups of 15 and with some social distancing. We do not have 14 classrooms!
- Schools have been told to plan for the maximum number of children although we accept that it is unlikely that all of the children will return straight away.
- Children having home learning will have access to the same broad learning but without the teaching element. Teachers will plan work on a rota basis, planning for two days teaching and three days home learning per week. Teachers will communicate with parents about this.
- In line with guidance, children will sit at individual desks with their individual equipment.
- Please do not send in any equipment from home.
- Please do not send in PE kits, just trainers (children can wear their trainers to school).
- Ideally, children will wear school uniform but we understand that they may have grown out of some items (including school shoes) so we are prepared to be flexible over this. Children should wear school uniform if they can and ideally their uniform should be washed when they return home from school each day.
- Book bags will not be required as we will not be sending reading books home.
- Children will need a lunch box (unless in YR / Y1 and having a cooked meal), a drinks bottle and a healthy snack (we do not yet know if we will be getting free fruit for YR/ Y1).
- There will be cooked lunches available for R/Y1 only in the 1st instance but parents can still choose to send in packed lunches. All Y6 and keyworker children will need packed lunches and may need to eat at individual desks in classrooms as there may not be room in the hall without making lunch time unfeasibly long. Obviously all the children will eat outdoors if the weather is suitable.
- A menu form for YR / Y1 will go on parent pay and parents will be notified via Classlist.
- We have to provide separate outdoor play areas for the different classes and the keyworker group. We will try to get the children outdoors as much as possible so coats may be needed.

- Children will enter in directly through their exterior classroom doors (including if we need to use class 3 and class 4 to spread the children out). You will be informed by the class teacher which room your child will be in.
- Drop off and pick up times will also need to be staggered. YR 8.30 – 2.30; Y1 8.45 – 3.00 and Y6 9.00 – 3.15. Key workers' children from 8.00 (if needed) – 3.15.

GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES

The guidelines specify that there is much which needs to be considered, for example:

- **Identify the likely numbers of pupils returning to school – PLEASE SEE THE ATTACHED REPLY FORM.**
- Accept that complete social distancing is not going to be possible in schools. We will try to encourage social distancing as much as is practical but we all know that children are not going to be able to keep at a 2m distance away from one another all the time.
- Staff will try to socially distance themselves from children as much as they can but we all accept that they cannot always teach them or help them from a 2m distance.
- Hygiene and cleaning will be imperative. Standard infection prevention and control measures including regular hand washing and regular cleaning are the best defence against infection.
- We have been told that school staff will not need Personal Protective Equipment unless dealing with intimate care or a suspected COVID19 case. However, we have decided that staff may choose to wear face coverings and we are issuing our staff with face visors.
- According to the government advice, children should not wear face coverings or face masks or visors. We cannot allow this as it may actually increase the risks with young children.
- The children will be in small groups in separate rooms with staggered play times and lunch times for each year group and the keyworker group.
- Door handles could be touched by many hands so we are asking that **parents and children do not touch door handles**. Please wait for children to be let in and out by their class adult.
- Parents should not enter the school **at all** unless it is absolutely essential. This includes coming into our reception area. Please email the school office instead, wherever possible. Please **DO NOT** use the front entrance for your children unless they are key worker children (Y2 – Y5 or possibly still YR, Y1 and Y6 if you need access to full-time provision).
- Working in line with government advice, it is extremely unlikely that there will be any school plays, concerts, whole school assemblies, school trips (apart from walking distance), sports days or other communal events during the summer term.
- We have been told that groups cannot mix, we have to prioritise and can only offer Early Birds to the children who will be in the keyworker group (entering via the hall door as usual) but there can be no lunchtime or after school clubs.
- All families who are in receipt of free school meals will still be able to access the voucher system as far as we are aware.
- The plan is that from 1st – 19th June home learning for whole year groups not in school (Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5) will continue as it does currently with a daily email although those teachers will also be covering a shift in school with keyworker children.
- If parents with children in YR, Y1 and Y6 choose not to send their children into school then they will get a minimum of a weekly email (possibly more but not guaranteed) with the learning tasks. It is not going to be possible for teachers of YR, Y1 and Y6 to manage both a full day teaching in school and home learning communications every day.
- If all year groups are allowed to come back to school then the same will apply with home learning for Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5. There will be a minimum of a weekly email (possibly more but not guaranteed) with the learning tasks.
- **Parents will not face any fines for choosing not to send their children into school at this time and schools will not be held to account for attendance levels.**

Local Authority Guidelines

- There will be school transport but not until Tuesday 2nd June as the vehicles have been SORN and we are advised that the providers cannot get all school transport taxed ready for 1st June.



- There is going to be a form of social distancing on school transport. Wiltshire Council will aim to provide a bus with at least twice as many seats as will be needed so that pupils do not sit together unless they are siblings. Vehicles will be cleaned at the end of every journey.
- Bus drivers will be wearing masks, please prepare your children for this. Children are not required to wear face masks or coverings on school transport. Parents are discouraged from boarding the bus to help with seat belts or what the children may be carrying.
- There will need to be social distancing from other households at bus stops.
- Parents should not gather together in large groups at school, they should practise social distancing and only 1 parent should accompany a child to school.
- School will have some form of markings externally and internally to help with social distancing.
- Children will need to remain at their desks when in the classroom (we will get them outside as much as we can).
- Children will keep coats, bags and lunchboxes with them in the classroom.
- Fixed play equipment (play trails) will be out of use and taped off.
- Soft toys, dressing up equipment and soft furnishings will be put away.
- We need to minimise adult to adult contact at drop off and pick up times so conversations between staff and parents (and between parents) must be kept to a minimum.
- If individual play items such as skipping ropes, hula hoops etc are used they should be used by a single child and cleaned before re-use.
- Doors and windows will be kept open (where safe) to encourage air flow and ventilation.
- Children should wash their hands before leaving home, during the day and before they leave school. They should wash their hands again when they get home.
- Children should be encouraged not to touch their faces, to cough and sneeze into a tissue (or their elbow in the absence of having a tissue to hand) and to throw tissues away.
- Routine testing of temperatures is not considered to be a reliable method for identifying coronavirus.

Believe me, this is not how I want school to be, but I have to relay the information and guidelines which we receive from the government and the Local Authority, **manage your expectations** and be honest with you. Parents will need to make their own decisions based on their own circumstances about whether a return to school, at this time, is right for them. I know that some people will not have a choice and for others it will be their own preferences. We will continue to revise our approach in the light of the latest information and safety advice. I can imagine that it is very difficult for some parents to say at this stage if they would send their children back but school leaders have been asked to identify the likely numbers of pupils returning to school. However, we only have 4 days and then half term, during which time we need to take practical actions so a prompt response would be very much appreciated.

Please be reassured that this information is not being relayed to paint a negative picture, or try to discourage families from sending their children to school. I just want to give you all the information I can to help you to make your decision. I cannot give you the scientific information on which to base your decision; we have to trust in others to do that. As far as I am led to believe, as this is in the press but has not yet been directly communicated to Headteachers, the government will “review the latest science” on **Thursday 28th May**, and that the return of some pupils on June 1st “will be delayed” if the evidence does not support the decision.

If your child is in YR, Y1 or Y6 please email the school ASAP using the reply slip. WE ONLY REQUIRE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILDREN IN THESE YEAR GROUPS AT THIS STAGE. If you are a keyworker and have some flexibility then we are going to have to ask you to choose between your child being part-time and taught with their class OR having access to full-time provision (as they do now) and being in the keyworker group. They cannot do both.

So to recap, for YR, Y1 and Y6 we will be offering 2 full days at school Monday and Tuesday OR Thursday and Friday with up to 15 children from each class allowed in who will then be split between 2 classrooms so smaller groups of 7 or 8 to give more time and attention to support the children to learn,



with no school on Wednesdays except for the children of key workers. We have to allow time for the extra cleaning and planning which is going to be needed to make this work safely for everyone.

The road to recovery is going to be quite challenging for schools, children and parents. We all need to work together on this, understanding that for all of us, this is not how we want it to be and it is part of a journey. None of us can know how long we will need to use these measures; I can only hope that it will not be for too long. These are just the steps we have to take to get back to some sort of normality or possibly a 'new normality'. It would be wonderful to think that by September we might all be back together except of course for our fantastic Year 6 children, who will be going off to their respective secondary schools and a whole new Reception class will be joining us.

I usually try to make my newsletters uplifting and to offer you a ray of hope. **There is hope!** Let me assure you that when the time is right for schools to open more fully, your children will be welcomed back to school by staff who will be smiling and genuinely pleased to see them. We all miss being with the children. Everything that we are putting in place has your children's best interests at heart.

In the interests of being a little light hearted and hopefully reassuring, let me tell you a story...

Primary education to any teacher is vital; it is the building blocks for not just the academic but for all aspects of learning. For me, a happy and successful primary education is my 'raison d'être'.

Once upon a time there was a little girl who went to 5 different state primary schools in her 7 years of primary education. There was no national curriculum at that time and no continuity. There were no SATS and definitely no online learning opportunities. As she moved from school to school it seemed that certain topics were the same no matter what the year group was. The Vikings for some reason were always being taught! It was all very confusing especially as every school seemed to teach using completely different methods so it was not a great experience of primary education! She didn't miss 4 months of school but the inevitable disruption of 5 schools in 7 years did mean that her education was rather disjointed and every move meant losing friendships and starting again. There were definitely periods of social isolation. Plus it was the 1970s and the methods of teaching were 'progressive' in that children were expected to discover things for themselves rather than be taught!

But she had a loving family who cared for her and who took an interest in education. They placed great value on reading, debate and real life learning experiences. She went on to pass her 11+ and thankfully had 7 consistent years at the local grammar school. She became a teacher and after 16 years of teaching she became a Headteacher and after 16 years of being a Headteacher she's here, writing this.

The moral of the story: education is vital but life skills and wellbeing are more important. All this disruption will pass and it will be ok. Learning is a lifelong experience.

I definitely have gaps in my learning and there are elements of certain subjects which I did not master. But it did not hold me back; if anything it made me stronger and gave me the resilience to face uncertainty and new situations and to want to learn more about subjects which particularly interested me.

Your children's education is my passion and I completely understand that missing school and missing friends is so hard. I do not underestimate the impact of social isolation but children are very resilient. Parents are understandably worried about sending children in to school and equally worried about not sending them in. There are pros and cons for both decisions. If you decide to wait until September it's absolutely fine. The children will be ok, they have a lifetime of learning and friendships ahead of them.

Finally, thank you so much for all the messages of support; they are hugely appreciated as we all navigate our way through uncharted waters.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Amanda Brockway
Headteacher



REPLY FORM FOR YR/ Y1 / Y6 / KEYWORKERS ONLY

PLEASE RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE – ideally by Friday 22nd May.
IF YOU DO NOT RETURN THEN THE OFFICE STAFF WILL NEED TO RING YOU.

As a reminder this is how it will work IF the wider opening of schools goes ahead:

Group A Monday, Tuesday – 15 children who can play together but spread into 2 classrooms into groups of 7 or 8 in order to give them plenty of support as we adjust.

Wednesday – only available for key workers (other classrooms cleaned in between 2 groups)

Group B Thursday, Friday – 15 children who can play together but spread into 2 classrooms into groups of 7 or 8 in order to give them plenty of support as we adjust.

Children of keyworkers – you are going to need to choose between Keyworker group, Group A or Group B. Only those parents who choose the keyworker group will be able to use Early Birds i.e. even if you are a keyworker but choose group A or group B you will not be able to use Early Birds.

If you have strong preference (i.e. due to work commitments) please state Group A Monday and Tuesday OR Group B Thursday and Friday

Child's / childrens' name(s).....

Child's / childrens' class(es).....

I am a keyworker and will be using the Keyworker group and understand that this means my child will be in a mixed age group. **YES / NO**

I am a keyworker and require Early Birds from 8.00 (no need to specify days at this stage) **YES / NO**

My child / children will be returning to school from 1st June **YES / NO**

Obviously you can change your mind but this information is needed. WE WILL NEED NOTICE THE WEEK BEFORE IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

PARENTS WHO SAY YES WILL BE PRIORITISED FOR THE GROUP WHICH THEY CHOOSE DUE TO WORK COMMITMENTS, THOSE WHO ARE UNDECIDED MAY NOT HAVE AN OPTION IF THEY DO DECIDE TO SEND CHILDREN IN AT A LATER DATE.

Group A Monday / Tuesday **YES / NO** Reason.....

Group B Thursday / Friday **YES / NO** Reason

No preference **YES / NO**

Finally, I understand and agree that if my child is displaying symptoms of coronavirus the school will contact me and I will collect my child straight away in order to keep everyone safe. I will then need to ensure my child is tested and kept away from school until the result of the test is known. If it is positive my child and the relevant group of people with whom my child has mixed closely will be sent home and advised to isolate for 14 days.

Name of Parent

