



6th July 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

First of all, I hope that this newsletter finds you and your families all safe and well.

You will have been watching the news and seeing on social media lots about the government's plans to re-open schools to all year groups from September. As Heads, we have received the guidance for full opening of schools from the Department for Education (DFE).

This is a 40 page document which gives details on how every school will return in September. As you will appreciate, there is currently a huge amount of planning being undertaken by myself, my team and my governors linked to the full opening of school.

Some headlines I can give you from the document are:

- Children will be grouped together in their class bubble which have been expanded to allow the return of full classes.
- Class bubbles must stay together across the day and not mix or come into contact with any other bubble. Contact between other bubbles must be avoided.
- Start and finish times will be staggered across year groups / classes to ensure that class bubbles are not mixing and groups are keeping apart as they arrive and leave school.
- Gathering at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment for parents / carers continues to be not allowed.
- Staggered break times and lunchtimes will also be in operation.
- Timetabling will need to be further increased linked to access to the toilet areas within school.
- Curriculum should be as 'broad and ambitious' as possible but teachers can use 'flexibility' to prioritise the most important content missed. The guidance admits the curriculum might not be back to 'normal' until next Summer.
- Social distancing will not be compulsory within the bubbles to ensure that schools have capacity for all.
- Staff must maintain distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible.
- Schools should support distancing where possible through adaptations.
- Classrooms have to be arranged with forward facing desks so that children are seated side by side.
- Frequently used equipment such as pencils and pens should not be shared and pupils should have their own items.
- Pupils are to limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day to essentials such as names water bottle, packed lunch (if they bring their own) coats and their reading folder.
- Pupils can take books home but unnecessary sharing should be avoided where this does not contribute to pupil education and development.
- Routines and procedures on hand cleaning, cleaning of resources and rotation will apply to resources taken home.
- All resources will have to be reviewed linked to September including indoor and outdoor playground equipment with more frequent cleaning a necessity.
- Continued increased cleaning will be a necessity before, during and after the school day.
- Active engagement needs to be undertaken with NHS Test and Trace.

Cont:/

- School must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools will work closely with the local health protection team and they will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus attended the school. The health protection team will work closely with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take linked to sending those who have been in close contact home, self-isolation requirements, closing a year group bubble or any other measures / action deemed necessary by the local health protection team.
- Final sign off for the back-to-school plan will not be given by the government until mid-August, based on an assessment of the state of the epidemic.

September at Whitehouse Primary School.

Here at Whitehouse, we are very much looking forward to welcoming all of our children back to school in September and ensuring that we have measures in place to enable this to be done as safely as possible. As a 'heads up' I can tell you that:-

- There will be staggered starts, finishes and shorter lunch breaks. Details will be sent out before we break up for summer.
- Those who have a school lunch, this will be in a hot box for children to eat in classrooms.
- We are very lucky to have such large outdoor grounds and are planning further line markings so that each class bubble will have their own play space.
- In line with many other schools, we will be condensing our statutory school hours and closing each Friday lunchtime so that the school can be deep cleaned and staff can have their PPA time (an essential part of teaching contracts) without the need for a PPA teacher covering, which would cross contaminate the bubble.
- There will be no Breakfast Clubs or After School Clubs for the first term. The room we have is very small and children come from mixed 'bubbles.' We have to temporarily suspend that childcare aspect of our provision for now and we will review this, as advice changes.

We have been working on what we think September will look like for a number of weeks now, but until last Thursday evening I hadn't had any official DFE guidance. Now I will be able to work with my team to establish the detail and I will.

Again I ask for your patience over the next week or so as I work through the document and continue to work on my plans and updated risk assessments over the course of this week.

I intend to be ready to write to parents / carers with information on how we will be reopening school for all pupils from September (including year group bubble start and finish times) during the last week of term. This is to enable you to have the information before school breaks up for the summer holidays on Friday 17th July. However, we would have to change at short notice if there were localised outbreaks.

A reminder that we have a training day on Tuesday 1st September 2020. This training day will still be going ahead although is now very different to the one I had planned for staff training! This training day will be needed to ensure that my team and I have finalised everything, all staff know the expectations and fully understand the plans and associated risk assessment, that we have time to update and 'tweak' anything that needs to be changed in the light of any announcements during August and that parents / carers can have any last minute notifications if there need to be any amendments following the summer.

My team and I will then be 100% confident that our happy school is fully ready to welcome our delightful children back on Wednesday 2nd September.

A few practical matters to the end of term...

- Our **CLASS PICNICS** that we have so carefully planned for the last week of summer term to meet all the children in small, outdoor groups of 15, have regrettably, had to be **CANCELLED**. I have been advised by the Director of Education and the Director of Public Health, that these will constitute an outdoor gathering and there are only 6 people allowed in an outdoor group allowed at present. This was a case of good intentions on our part to round off the year on a positive note for our children. However, we must comply with the guidance and keep everyone safe.
“The guidance for schools states that school should be ‘Maintaining distinct groups or ‘bubbles’ that do not mix’
The general guidance for Staying Safe Outside Your Home states ‘You must not meet outdoors in a group of more than 6 with people who are not in your household or (where applicable) support bubble, or for other limited circumstances listed in law.’” W Burke, Director of Public Health. We are so sorry, as we know how many of our children were looking forwards to this. In its place.....
- **Class teachers will send you appointment times**, based on ten minute intervals when it would be lovely to see you on a one to one basis (with a parent, if possible) to give out your reports, have a quick talk about next year, hand out any lost property and some summer goodies! This will be during the last week of term.
- We know how hard many of you have been working at home and didn't want you to be at a loss over the summer. As a generous gesture, the school has purchased some **CGP workbooks** for most year groups. We will be giving them out when you come to school, in a wallet with a pen/pencil to complete over the summer break There will be a prize for the best returns in September!
- I have also been in contact with the Head of the Schools Library Service and they are working hard to prepare **book bags** for our children at Whitehouse to borrow over the summer. As all our Whitehouse children know.....'Books are Treasures' and it is so important you all enjoy the wonderful world of books. These must be returned intact after the holidays. We will include a book bag of at least 2 books for you to enjoy and the Summer Reading Challenge leaflet! There will be medals and prizes for the most books read over the holidays.
- The Summer School arranged by the **YMCA has today, been cancelled**. Thankyou to those who applied for a place. The YMCA apologised for this but, having read the new National Youth Agency Guidelines, the staff decided that, as a country still at Amber alert, they could not take any risks. Instead, they are going to be delivering a Lamp Post Project, which will involve 2 workers setting up local activities for an hour or so at the end of your streets during the summer break. Further details will follow.
- The class bubbles with relatively low numbers are working well in YR, Y1, Y6, EHCP and key workers groups. Children and parents are following the safety guidelines we have put in place. We will keep this system as it is until the end of term as we are very busy operating a 'blended model' of schooling, where staff are working hard to deliver in school and remote learning/learning packs, whilst visiting many houses to ensure that children are fed and cared for and offer general support to our families.
- Food vouchers will be sent on the last day of term for the Summer holidays. We are not expecting this scheme to continue once the school re-opens. Please remember to apply for free school meals if your circumstances change over the Summer break. To apply, go to the mynorthtyneside website and search for free school meals. If you are entitled you will be able to receive a voucher for the Summer holidays.

May I take this opportunity to send you and your family my very best wishes and those of my team and governors. My team and I are very appreciative of your support for your child and our school. Please stay safe and look after each other.

Best wishes

Rachel Woods
Headteacher