



## Ox Close Primary School

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**Executive Headteacher – Mr D Harrison**  
**Head of School – Miss A Bowden**



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**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

### **School Reopening Update**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to everyone who contributed to last week's survey, which asked if you intended to send your child back to school in the event that there is a reopening as planned by the UK Government on June 1<sup>st</sup>. I thought that it would be worthwhile trying to address some of the queries raised by those who are uncertain. I totally understand the sentiments which parents have been expressed. The results of this survey have been included at the end of this letter for your reference.

The volume of updates and guidance from the Government is vast and this changing information makes definitive planning difficult. However, we have consulted the guidance and contingencies which help to keep children and adults safe are our absolute priority. I have attempted to share the principles of our planning below, as well as answer some of the main queries from parents. Common sense dictates that the guidelines have to be applied to each local context. In terms of Ox Close Primary, that means the numbers of pupils, the number of staff who are available to work and, crucially, the size of the rooms. **In terms of the school, the rooms will safely fit up to a maximum of 12 pupils in while applying social distancing measures (not 15 which is referred to in the guidance).**

#### **An outline of planned organisation for Ox Close Primary**

Parents have asked about which measures that will be in place and this is the first one. Practically, if there are 45 children in a year group, then that means that we must have multiple groups for EVERY year group that is in school. Workplace guidance speaks of consistency of staffing and in effect creating self-contained 'bubbles'. This means that there must be separate rooms and separate teams of staff within each year group, each of whom will be attached to one of the pupil groups. We will be unable to guarantee that children will be with their usual teacher and classmates. The classes will also be spread out as far as is possible within the site. **While we are unable to confirm definite details, provisional plans would suggest that the children who are in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will be in school for 2 days per week. Please note that these days will be reduced hours.** This will enable cleaning of classrooms, including a weekly deep clean, which will be necessary in order to minimise risks and this is something which will be factored in, as well as the need to accommodate Emergency Childcare for key workers (these children will also have to be socially distanced). This way of grouping the children is the only way to apply guidance safely for both children and staff taking into account pupil numbers and the space which we have available. Workplace guidance dictates that contacts between staff must also be minimised and it is also necessary to have areas where staff can safely have breaks and lunch- the current staff room fits between 3 and 4 people when social distancing is applied.

In the event that school reopens, each pupil group would be restricted to their own room and would not be allowed to interact or mix with other groups. Some parents asked how we will monitor social



distancing and this organisation will be the best possible way as it will restrict contact and this is a key principle of the guidance This would apply to play times, which would be staggered. Lunch will be eaten in the classroom and there will be some play time outside at lunch time but only with children from their own group and social distancing would be applied and supervised carefully by staff. Each classroom will be set up with the desks spaced out to maintain social distancing and will also have hand sanitiser, something which we have ensured that we are well stocked up on!

### **Drop offs and Pick ups**

In order to try to minimise the spread of infection, parents will not be permitted to come on site at drop off and pick up time or at other times without appointment. Guidance also discourages gatherings at the school gates at the beginning or end of the day. This will apply to all schools and settings across the country. Parents will be able to call at the office with an appointment but wherever possible communication should be via telephone or email in the first instance. There will be one specified entrance for pupils and it will be made clear which groups are entering at what time. Staff will be on duty inside of the gate and will ensure social distancing in a reassuring manner from the time the children enter the school premises. As noted, pick ups and drop offs will be staggered on order to prevent crowding and queuing at the entrances and exits. When these arrangements are confirmed, we will be in touch to explain how this will work. We fully understand how different these arrangements are to our usual ones but I am sure that you will appreciate that we are trying to ensure the safety of all.

### **Which other measures will be in place?**

I have addressed many of the measures above. In addition, we will have a designated medical area. Any child who displays symptoms will be placed safely within this medical area and the First Aiders will have PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). There will be a designated toilet for those who are poorly and this will not be used by any other pupils. Needless to say, in the event that a pupil was ill, parents would be contacted. The Government Guidance for Parents, which we referenced and linked in our letter last week, contains exact procedures on what would happen if there is one case or more. School would also contact Public Health England. As well as ordering supplies such as hand sanitiser, thermometers have been ordered and we have them available to use. All Risk Assessments will be in place in line with Government and Durham County Council guidelines. For example, there is a 41 page checklist which has been issued by Durham County Council so all eventualities will be considered in this Risk Assessment process.

Children will not be allowed to wander unaccompanied around the site. Risk Assessments will be in place for those with additional needs. Staff will continue to be friendly and reassuring whilst socially distancing. We fully grasp that this situation would be very strange for all. Many parents have raised concerns about the potential impact upon the mental health of children and possible cause of anxieties. I totally agree with this point and we will monitor this closely as and when the school reopens.

### **Will I be fined if I don't send my child to school?**

**No.** We fully understand that parents may choose that, although the school and Nursery will put every possible sensible safety contingency in place, it is impossible to guarantee that the virus will not be in school at some point. For that reason, the Government **are not fining parents if you decide that your child will not attend school.** If, having considered everything, you decide to keep your child at home, that is understandable under the current circumstances. I must also stress that if you are on the vulnerable list and shielding, you **should not** send your child to school according to Government guidance. Several parents explained that they were shielding and expressed concerns over this. We recommend that you refer carefully to the guidance when making your decision.

### **What will the children be learning?**

While the social aspects of learning will be impossible to facilitate, the children will be following a conventional curriculum. At any one time, there will be more pupils off site than actually at school. This means that our online work will continue and the content of learning will be the same in school as it is for those pupils who are off site.

## Emergency Childcare

Emergency childcare will continue to be available for critical workers 5 days per week and these children will complete a mixture of learning and general childcare provision. The hours will continue to run from 8am to 4pm and be bookable online. The childcare will be staffed with a variety of staff from the school.

## What next?

We will issue another survey tomorrow at 12 noon for parents and carers with children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. **We would be very grateful if you could complete this survey.** The aim will be to give us a firmer idea of likely pupil numbers, which will then mean that we can inform those parents who have children who are attending with firmer plans.

At this stage there is no certainty that schools will be open on June 1<sup>st</sup> but we have to make plans and inform you of these in case that the school is open. Even by the Prime Minister's own admission, the planned reopening is conditional and it is believed that he will make a decision upon the potential lifting of the lockdown on May 28<sup>th</sup>. I will also be speaking to Governors and the Local Authority and deliberating our plans. **We will continue to update you and please be assured that the safety and welfare of pupils and staff is our absolute priority.**

Yours faithfully,

*D Harrison*

Mr Harrison  
Executive Headteacher

## Survey Results

