

14th July 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

We have now received the most recent guidance from the government outlining that it is vital for ALL children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development. We, therefore, look forward to welcoming all our pupils back to school in September 2020.

The guidance explains the system of controls and includes a number of mandatory elements as well as further points, relating to specific Public Health advice, which builds on measures already taken in St Nicholas Owen schools. The guidance sets out steps that schools MUST take to safeguard the health and well-being of pupils as well as the wider school and local community.

These steps relate to 'prevention' and schools MUST:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who has someone in their household who is displaying symptoms, must not attend school
- insist on cleaning hands thoroughly more often than usual
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach

Schools MUST as far as possible:

- minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

In response to any infection, schools MUST:

- engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community
- contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Since receiving confirmation that ALL pupils are expected to return to school in September, St Nicholas Owen leaders and Academy Committee members have taken certain measures to prepare our sites and review our practices in order to do this as effectively and efficiently as possible. As part of planning for full reopening in the autumn term we will build on the learning to date and the practices we developed during partial re-opening and keyworker/vulnerable children provision.

We remain primarily concerned for the well-being and safety of our pupils, staff and families.

- A revised risk assessment of all sites and routines is being carried out
- One-way systems, playground and toilets have been zoned for different groups of children as appropriate to the specific setting

- Classroom spaces are being cleared and, where possible, desks will be forward facing.
- Additional resources for cleaning and sanitisation have been purchased
- New cleaning rotas and procedures have been drawn up

The government has given assurance that the scientific evidence supports its decision to bring all children back to school in September 2020. They believe it is safe for children to be in school and therefore **from September, full time education is compulsory**. The government has produced some guidance for you as parents and it can be found via the link at the end of this letter.

Taking on board the new advice, in addition to building on our experience of partial opening during the summer term, we have agreed a set of broad principles that will be followed in each school to comply with the scientific advice available and minimise the risks to our children and families:

Start and end of the school day:

- There will be staggered start and finish times for our primary schools and a staggered finish time for the secondary school
- Parents will be advised that only one person should accompany children to school
- Public transport should be avoided if at all possible and where public transport is used pupils **MUST** wear masks
- Parents will not be allowed to enter school buildings unless they have a pre-arranged appointment. Appointments should be remote wherever possible.
- Parents will be asked to observe social distancing and not gather in groups at the pick up/drop off points
- Pupils will enter by a specified door and will wash their hands as soon as they arrive
- Staff will continue to communicate with parents via phone, email, texts and the school website

During the day:

In reality, when all children return to school they cannot be expected to fully keep to social distancing. However, the principles below will be put in place to ensure contact is minimal and the risks reduced:

- Children will be in 'Bubbles' in line with government guidelines. The make-up of the bubbles will be specific to the context of each school
- As far as possible, the same staff will stay with each group, however, some staff will move between 'Bubbles' as permitted by the guidance
- A one-way system may be introduced, where possible, to support safe movement around the school site
- 'Bubbles' will have designated toilet facilities to use
- Staff will manage and monitor children's toilet visits so social distancing is maintained
- Pupils and staff will have the facilities needed to wash and cleanse their hands regularly
- Staff will remind pupils about hygiene routines, handwashing and not touching their faces and mouths. We will continue to share the 'catch it bin it, kill it' message.
- Classrooms and all areas used will be cleaned more regularly and bins emptied frequently
- Where possible windows will be left open to improve ventilation
- As far as possible, children will work with the same equipment which will be cleaned regularly

- Children will wear school uniform – normal washing routines are now recommended
- On days when pupils have PE, they will be allowed to attend school in their PE kit

What about lunch and break times?

- Pupils will be allowed outside for fresh air and physical exercise
- Lunch and break times will be staggered
- Hot food should be available but may be later in the term for some schools
- Some children will eat their lunch in the classroom and some in the hall as usual, depending on the space available
- If your child has an accident or is upset a member of staff will comfort and care for them

What will the curriculum cover?

In order to avoid mixing children from different bubbles – there will be no whole school assemblies or gatherings. Assemblies may be done remotely with a video link to the classrooms.

In our primary schools, to help children to catch up on what they have missed, and so teachers can identify where the gaps in learning might be for each child, there will be focus on the core subjects of RE, reading, writing, phonics and maths. We also need to make sure that the children are happy and reassured so that they can settle back into to their school routines following this challenging and upsetting time. Therefore, during the first term we will also focus on PSHE as well as more creative subjects and activities such as art, music, drama and PE. Weather permitting, we will do lots of work outside and give the children plenty of opportunities to talk about how they are feeling. We will be reviewing the curriculum constantly during the Autumn Term and plan to return to the full curriculum as soon as we feel the children are ready to do so. Once we have returned, we will begin to consider plans for our usual exciting trips, visits and experiences, but only when we know it is safe to do so.

For specific details of the secondary curriculum plans, please refer to the school specific plans.

What to do if your child is ill:

Within usual practices in school, pupils and staff will not be expected to wear facemasks, unless a child becomes ill.

- Staff dealing with First Aid matters will wear PPE and this will be provided by school
- If your child displays COVID-19 symptoms, they will be isolated with a member of staff in PPE and you will be called and asked to collect your child immediately. You will be given clear advice and support about what to do next.

Staff at St Nicholas Owen MAC will not be routinely taking children's temperature. If you suspect your child has a temperature, or any one of the other COVID-19 symptoms (however mild) please do not send your child to school. As a reminder the main symptoms of COVID-19 are a high temperature, a new continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense or smell.

All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a COVID-19 test if they display symptoms. It is important that the test is taken promptly and within the first few days of displaying symptoms.

Please be aware that if a child, or member of staff who has been in school tests positive for COVID-19, the other children and staff members within that Class/Bubble will be asked to go home and self-isolate for 14 days.

The government has also advised that there may be a need for local lockdown situations. If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread. The Department for Education will be involved in decisions at a local and national level affecting a geographical area, and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice. In the event of this happening, we will follow government advice and inform you immediately of what will happen next.

When should my child come to school?

Each school is making specific plans for the return to school in September. The exact details of when your child should come to school will be sent out in a letter before the end of term.

There will also be specific details about which entrances/exits/doors to use and any other arrangements that you need to be aware of.

Our St Nicholas Owen Principals, Academy Committee Representatives and Board of Directors will be constantly reviewing any new government advice or decisions over the summer. We will communicate with you as much as possible to keep you informed and up to date. Please keep checking your child's school website for updates throughout the summer.

We are excited to be making these plans to welcome ALL children back into school in September. We have missed seeing their happy eager faces every day during this time. What a strange year it has been!

If you are unclear about the contents of this letter, have concerns or specific circumstances that you would like to discuss then please contact the Principal of your child's school. However, please note that as stated, we will confirm these plans and provide more details in draft form on individual school websites from Wednesday 15th July 2020.

With very best wishes and God Bless

Suzanne Horan

Catholic Senior Executive Leader

Guidance for full opening of schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Guidance for parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>



Member Academies:

Hagley Catholic High School
Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School, Harborne
St. Ambrose's Catholic Primary School, Kidderminster
St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Stourbridge
St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Brierley Hill
St. Wulstan's Catholic Primary School, Stourport
