

Grove Street Primary and Nursery School



Where Learners Grow

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Although we are still awaiting a Local Authority decision regarding the phased reopening and the year groups which this will affect, we wanted to share with you the information we have so far, including our potential plans, in line with government health and safety guidance.

We cannot wait for our school to be filled again with happy children, enjoying learning, feeling nurtured, cared for and in the company of their friends. It is clear however, that we must go step by step and above all, ensure that we are keeping everyone safe. We have studied the guidance documents very carefully and would like to share our initial thinking on this, so you are aware of what this will look like for our children.

Education and childcare settings are already open to the children of key workers and vulnerable children. Children in these groups are now being encouraged to attend if they are not already doing so therefore numbers are likely to increase. We are told that all children must be in small groups of no more than 15.

Schools are being asked to prepare for children in the early years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to begin a return to school, **no earlier than 1st June 2020**. These children must also be in small groups, no more than 15.

All this gives schools on Wirral, and throughout the country, much to consider. Schools will be limited by how many groups of no more than 15 they can accommodate in suitable spaces in schools. In our school, this will vary room to room- some classrooms will need to be smaller groups to enable the 2m distancing between desks.

Schools will also be limited by the numbers of staff available. Staff who are shielding will not be able to return to school at this point and have been instructed that they must remain working at home. Some schools on Wirral will be greatly affected by this necessary measure.

Government guidance for schools includes:

- As children must be in small groups, **they are likely not to be with their own class teacher or their friends or in their own classroom.**
- The government guidance says that as far as possible, they will **need to remain with the same group 'bubble'** and the same adult while they are in school.
- **Breaks must be taken in the same small groups, staggered so that the children do not mix in larger groups.** As a result, playtimes and lunchtimes will need to be different than usual. Children will remain in their bubble group for their lunch. Social distancing guidance **must** continue to be in effect during lunch and playtime.
- **Outdoor play will be limited** as we have been advised that **children do not use the play equipment because of the risk of transmission between 'bubbles' of children.** Social distancing will still need to be followed outdoors.
- **Children will need to observe social distancing and so will not be able to sit at the same table with others.**
- The government guidance has stated that school staff do not need to wear PPE but are advised to remain 2m away from children. **They are advised to wear PPE when administering first aid or nappy changing- this will mean staff will wear a visor, mask, apron and gloves.** Please consider this as I feel this may be frightening for your young children.
- **We are instructed that all classroom items and resources that cannot be easily cleaned must be put away.** Activities must be limited to things that can be cleaned regularly.

- **In early years rooms, this will change the classroom environment that the children are familiar with. For example, there will be no sand, water, playdough, paint or dressing up clothes.**
- **All soft furnishings in the rooms will need to be removed e.g. reading dens / areas**
- We must avoid children sharing resources where we can and, if they must share, we need to be able to clean equipment after each use. Children must not bring their own stationery or personal belongings into school to avoid the spread of the virus.

Schools will need to carry out additional stringent cleaning everyday so that when children leave, the spaces and resources that they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. This is already happening daily but as numbers increase, there will be more areas and resources to clean. Additional time for cleaning will have to be factored into any arrangements that schools make for the return of more children.

So what does this mean for parents on Wirral?

- Children of key workers and vulnerable children must continue to be accommodated first. Schools will then be able to see how many additional children they can care for dependent on spaces and staffing available.
- This clearly may mean that not all children in the early years, F2, Y1 and Y6 may be able to attend at once. We are looking carefully at this, considering what provision we can safely offer. It will not be the same for all schools on Wirral – it cannot be as it will depend on the accommodation and staffing available in individual schools.
- In order to be able to allow as many children in the designated year groups to attend school, **schools may offer places on a part-time basis or for a certain number of sessions per week.**
- **School will be very different for children returning.** The children need to understand that **they will most likely not be with their own teacher or in their own classroom** as this may not be possible. **Routines and systems will be unfamiliar and more formal than usual.** They will, however, **be well cared for and welcomed by the adult who is working with them.**

When the time comes for some children to return, at our school and all schools on Wirral, we will be doing everything we can to follow the guidance issued by the DfE to keep everyone safe and parents will need to help too:

- You will be given **staggered times to arrive at school and to collect children** so that schools can try to safely manage this and ensure there is minimal adult contact – **2m distancing between adults must be maintained.** Parents must not gather at the school gates when arriving or departing and allotted drop off and pick up times must be kept to strictly, to avoid mixing of 'bubbles' and groups.
- **Only one adult can accompany children to school.**
- Children must wear fresh, clean clothes each day to school (comfortable clothes that are easily washed).
- Families must continue to observe the current social distancing guidance out of school so must not be mixing with other households.

These are challenging times for us all. Many of you will be anxious to get back to work but many will be worried about sending children back to school. School staff understand and share those anxieties for their own children and families. Wirral schools will do everything they can to respond to the guidance given by the government but will also be ensuring that we do this safely.

I feel it's important for you to be aware of the guidance for schools and how different it will be. You know your child best, if they would be able to cope emotionally with the changes and will also consider any vulnerable adults in your family.

- **If you feel the time is not right for your children to return, that is your choice and I completely understand.**
- **There is no compulsory education at the moment, and parents will not be penalised in any way for choosing to keep their children at home for a little longer.**
- **I will completely support the decision of all of our families.**

This initial thinking will develop in the coming days. Further advice will be given from the Local Authority and the Department of Education and when we are able to share further information with you, we will do this. You will also be aware that professional associations and unions have many concerns and they will be working at local level and national level to resolve these. Until then, the date of June 1st is not confirmed but nevertheless, we wanted to share the key points in the guidance we have been given clearly so that you also have time to think about this.

We would love nothing better than to have everything back to normal and to welcome your children back with open arms, but we are all in unprecedented times. We miss the children so much but want to be able to nurture, comfort and teach them in our usual Grove Street way; we look forward to the time when this will be possible. **Welcoming them back safely must be our priority and we know you would want this to be the case.**

To follow on from this letter, we will send out **a link to survey monkey for you to be able to indicate if you wish your child to return to school in June.** The initial survey was from the LA - this one is from school to enable us to get an idea of numbers of children. Whilst it is important for you to have the time to consider the information and discuss it with your family, we do ask that you complete the survey before 3pm on Tuesday 19th May, to give us the required time and information to proceed safely and confidently.

If you have a child in Year 6 and choose for your child not to return, please be assured that we will still be organising transition arrangements with their secondary school and we will plan a Year 6 celebration / goodbye in July for ALL Year 6 children.

We are also busy planning a catch up programme of learning for all our children for the first Autumn half-term, so please don't worry about your child or children missing out on learning.

If you have any concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to message me on Class/School DoJo or email me; many of you already have who were worried about their children returning to school and I hope I've reassured parents that I support them in their decision. Whatever is right for you and your child, we will support you.

Take care and keep safe,

Mrs. Walsh

