



Trottiscliffe

CE Primary School

21st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly I wanted to express our thanks for all the supportive messages we have continued to receive throughout this period. As I am sure you are aware, it has been very stressful for staff as well as for you and your families but it has been so rewarding to see that the school community has continued to support each other virtually during this time.

As previously promised I am now able to offer further information for parents regarding the proposed wider opening of our school although I must stress that these plans are still under review at this point and will continue to be reviewed as further guidance and information is received. This letter is very long detailed and I know that might be overwhelming but I also appreciate many of you have questions about what school will be like before you make a decision about returning and so I have tried to answer as many as possible here to inform your decision. Please be assured that on 1st June, you will be sent a much briefer communication containing the finalised specific details for the first phase.

After reviewing the latest government guidance and consulting with staff, I have submitted a plan for consideration by the Governing Body of a return for Year R, 1 and 6, which we feel mitigates as much risk as is possible at this time. Due to the huge volume of preparation to the school environment required, the fact that some of the required additional resources have still not yet been delivered and the necessity to ensure all guidance and protocols are fully understood by all staff, the school will have to use Monday 1st June for staff training. As you can see from the enclosed photographs, we have made a good start on all of the necessary preparations, but it is half term next week and I hope you will agree that our staff definitely deserve to take a break during this time. We understand there will be a final announcement from the government on 28th May, however at present our plan will be as follows:

1st June – School closed for essential preparation and staff training

2nd June – School open to Years R, 1 and 6 and identified key worker children only

The school that the children are returning to is not the Trottiscliffe CE Primary as they know it. Based on government recommendation and our own knowledge of how the school operates, the adjustments that we have put in place will change the way the school feels and looks to the children and we want to prepare you and your children for these changes. On the 1st June, each child will be sent a virtual tour of their classroom and the changes will be explained for them. We are also aware that many parents are concerned as to how things will be different and what measures are being put in place to keep their children as safe as possible in school.

As a school, we place the safety of our staff and pupils as our highest priority. When dealing with an invisible virus, there can be no guarantees however we are taking all recommended precautions. We ask that whatever your personal thoughts are regarding the Covid-19 virus and its transmission, that you correctly observe and follow the latest government guidance regarding social distancing. If you choose not to, you are not only potentially putting your children at risk, but also the other children in the school and our staff members and their families.

Will my child be with their class teacher?

During this first phase, Years R, 1 and 6 will be taught by their teacher whilst key worker children will be supervised by Mrs Frame. All children will be doing the same activities as will be provided for Home Learning to ensure that all children have equality of provision. Children will be split into bubbles (depending on the number of children returning). These bubbles will be restricted in number due to the space available to ensure social distancing. As we are such a small school, we have limited numbers of staff available and will

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not be able to bring in supply staff to minimise transmission. Additionally we have staff members who, due to pre-existing medical conditions, may not be returning to school in June.

I am sure many of you are already aware that all teachers require 10% of their timetable as non-contact time to enable them to plan, prepare and assess the work for their classes. This is even more important at present as teachers will need to be preparing home learning for the children not returning yet to school. This will not be able to be provided now without risking transmission between bubbles therefore we will need to close on Friday afternoons each week for all children apart from any key worker children that require childcare. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

Will my child be taught in their original classrooms?

Again, this is not always going to be the case however, during this first phase Years R, 1 and 6 will be in their classrooms with key worker children who need childcare being supervised in the hall.

Children are missing their friends, will they all play and learn together?

The simple answer is unfortunately no.

In order to minimise the risk of spreading the virus, the children will remain solely within their 'bubble'. They will learn, play and eat only with the group they have been allocated to, and mixing with children beyond that group will not be possible.

This is a significant change for the children in our school who are used to mixing across the age groups and one which makes the need to be aware of wellbeing of paramount importance.

If a case of COVID-19 is confirmed within a bubble, organising the school in this way (based on government recommendation) goes some way to prevent it spreading more widely. In the instance of a confirmed case, all parents would be informed and children and staff within that 'bubble' would be asked to isolate for 14 days and be tested should symptoms develop.

The way in which children are organised into bubbles will be decided by the school and we will not be able to accept requests from parents.

So how will playtime work?

Playtimes will be staggered to restrict the number of children on the playground, with each 'bubble' having their own playtime in their own designated area. We will ensure that all children are washing hands before and after playtime

Within the playtime groups themselves, we will try to keep children two metres apart – but this may not always be possible and cannot be guaranteed as children will be children. What we will do is prevent games that involve touching (tag for example) and prevent direct contact. Children may be able to play individually with a skipping rope or hula hoop and these will be cleaned after every use.

It is important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group. At Trottiscliffe in order to protect the safety of our staff, children and families, we will be enforcing, where possible 2 metre social distancing even when playing, which is consistent with the government's general message.

What about school lunches?

For the children, lunchtimes will also be organised differently as to get children into the hall to eat whilst maintaining social distancing, separated from other groups with thorough cleaning between services would simply not be practical. Instead, all children will have a packed lunch. These will be provided by Caterlink for Years R, 1 and 2 and for families in Key Stage 2 who are in receipt of Free School Meals. This will allow children to eat their lunches either in the classrooms or outside when weather permits.

How will classrooms be organised?

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Our classrooms vary in size so we have experimented with rearranging the furniture to accommodate as many children whilst maintaining 2m distancing. Years 1 to 6 will be seated at individual desks spaced 2m apart throughout the day. The only movement will be for going outside or to the bathroom. This is very different for how we like the learning experience to be at Trottiscliffe but is unfortunately necessary to minimise risk of transmission for children and staff. In Kenya class, the children will be able to continue to learn through play. Much of their play will be outside based. The room will have all resources that are difficult to clean removed including soft furnishings and children will be washing hands as they move from one activity to another. Resources will be cleaned throughout the day and in this way we hope to minimise risk of transmission but will still allow our youngest children to learn in the best way.

We will be providing all children with a wallet of resources (pens, pencils, ruler etc.) so they must not bring pencil cases from home into school.

Children are not to bring bags into school. The only items to be brought in are their reading book, lunch box (if needed) and water bottle. All items will be kept at their desk. Staff will not be marking children's books but will give verbal feedback. Staff will use hand sanitiser after any physical contact with a child and/or their resources.



What is the guidance around PPE in schools?

The latest government guidance to wear face coverings in public and where there is a risk of close social contact with people does not apply to schools or other education settings. Therefore we do not require staff or children to wear face coverings.

It is my belief, however, that there are times when it is entirely appropriate for PPE to be used so I have allocated some of the school budget specifically for the purchase of PPE. For example, if a child needs first aid or is unwell, this puts child and adult in far greater contact than would ordinarily happen. To this end, we have purchased a stock of gloves, aprons, masks and visors to be used in both these and any other situations that may arise, reducing the risk to pupils and staff alike. Staff will be given the option to wear a face mask if they wish, however children will not be able, in most cases, to put them on and take them off by themselves safely and will in case pose greater risk if they are fiddled with so we would ask that children do not wear them.

Will children wear school uniform?

The short answer to this is yes! That will provide children with some normality in this unusual school experience. However the children will need clean clothes every single day, as will staff. We also will not be asking children to change shoes or get changed if they do PE. Therefore we are happy for if you run out of freshly washed uniform, the children can wear their PE kit to school some days, and they can also wear their trainers. Luckily the weather is on our side at the moment regarding getting laundry washed and dried so hopefully a clean uniform each day will be feasible for all.

Will you change the way the school will be cleaned?

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All contact points in the school will be cleaned at break time, lunchtime and after school. The cleaning during the day will be a more limited clean but all door handles, desks and chairs will be cleaned while the children are out to play. Staff will also be cleaning the resources and toys used by children regularly.

So... drop off and pick up?

Whilst I will miss the normal opportunity to chat with parents during drop off in the morning and at the end of the day, we have made changes to the way that children will be dropped at school and picked up. We based this on the need to manage distancing, space to queue if needed and the development of a one-way system.

- Drop-off and pick up times will be staggered by 10 minutes to minimise the number of families on site, we ask that only one adult accompanies each child wherever possible. Year 6 children are strongly encouraged to walk in to school on their own whether from home or from where parents feel they can safely leave them.
- You will be expected to bring your child at a specific time and you **MUST** be there at that time. Each bubble is allocated 10 minutes for drop off and if you arrive after your child's allocated time, you will need to wait until 9:20am before joining the queue. We would ask that you do not join the queue until your designated time, this will avoid crossover between different bubbles. If you have more than one child attending school we would ask that where possible children in Years 3-6 join the queue for their given time and you wait in your car with your younger children for their given time. If this really isn't possible then your children must all be brought at the time assigned for your youngest child.
- When arriving in school for the start and end of the day, you will come to the front gate where there are distancing lines to help you wait observing social distancing. Mrs Ballard will be by this gate. You will then be directed to enter the playground observing the green arrow floor markings for distancing. All children will then enter the school via the toilets where they will be supervised washing their hands. In order to aide this process, we ask that parents do not prolong their goodbyes, stay by the arrow markings and allow their children to enter the school independently. The children will be met by their teacher after they have washed their hands and will be escorted to their learning space.
- Parents must then continue to exit the playground following the arrows to the pencil gates promptly and **MUST NOT** hang around outside school chatting to other parents.



Picking up



- Again the pickup times are staggered by ten minutes. We ask that all parents are prompt in collecting their children each day.
- One adult per child will enter by the front gate and follow the arrows to stand on one of the green 'distancing dots' on the netball court. The teacher will bring children one at a time to the edge of the playground and they will be released to their parent. You will then need to leave the playground by the pencil gate and go home.
- If you have multiple children in school, they will all be collected at the earliest time
- We would like parents to avoid allowing children to play in the park straight after school as this defeats the object of all the distancing measures we are putting in place in school for the safety of our community.

This one-way system will limit people meeting in opposite directions when arriving and leaving school.

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Can all my children come in if I have one child coming in already?

Unfortunately not. Unless your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6, they should not be attending school. If you are a critical key worker and there is not an adult at home to supervise your child (and there are further conditions to this) so you believe you may require childcare on specific days, you should have already notified the school. Please remember, children in Years 2-5 will not be receiving any teaching in school and will just be being supervised to complete exactly the same home learning that is being set for all children. Most of the staff have children and have been continuing to work full time as key workers at home throughout this closure whilst trying to support their own children's home learning, we all know how incredibly challenging this is. However we simply cannot safely accommodate all children in the space we have and we ask that you respect that the numbers are limited to ensure we can open safely for those that have been prioritised by the government and are genuinely in need.

Can I come in to school?

The contact between home and school is a key element of any primary school and we do not wish to compromise this. However, the way in which we make contact must be managed differently during this pandemic. Any comments or concerns can be emailed or communicated over the phone but we will not be offering any face-to-face meetings at this time.

Will my child be safe?

I cannot offer you a guarantee and the risk of catching Covid 19 will still be there. You will see that we are making every effort to minimise the risk but unfortunately this is a dangerous virus and is cannot be completely eliminated.

What about my child's mental health?

At Trottiscliffe your child's mental health is a priority, even before this outbreak mental health and well-being was a real priority and this has not changed. We will continue to support all parents with their concerns and worries and we will of course support the children as they return to school or continue to learn from home. I am concerned about the impact on the children of returning to school with such measures in place and we ask that you talk these changes through with your children at home to help to prepare them.

What about the other year groups, when will they be starting back?

At present there is no set date for the rest of the school to return but it definitely will not be before 22nd June. We only have limited space in school and therefore accommodating the whole school in small bubbles would be logistically impossible. On the attached form, we are also therefore asking various questions regarding this second phase so that we can begin to plan for this should it happen. It is vital therefore that you do return this form to school for each of your children by 29th May.

What if I do not want my child to return?

I completely understand that many parents still have concerns and anxieties around returning their children to school and we will support your decision. These are your children and you need to make the decision that is right for you and your families' health, safety and well-being.

The government are really clear that parents who choose not to return their children to school because they do not feel it is safe yet will not be prosecuted and attendance will not be reported on. We will continue to provide home learning online for all children who are not attending school and staff will be on hand to support. However, please bear in mind that all teachers will now be teaching so may not always be able to respond to any emails of support immediately.

Finally...

I ask that you complete the attached form and return this to the school office as soon as possible for **every child** whatever year group they are in. If you do not return the form by Friday 29th May, your child will not

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be able to return to school until Monday 8th June as provision will not have been made for them even if they are in the designated year groups . All decisions in school at present are strictly governed by the number of children on site therefore it is frustrating that not all parents return forms when they are asked to so please complete this promptly. Some parents struggled with the Google form so we are sending this as a Word document and in PDF format. These will also shortly be added to our website's Covid-19 page along with a Google form link. Hopefully this way we will be able to receive replies from all families.

I will be in touch again with the confirmed details of the plan once we have heard from the government on 28th May. I would love to set things in concrete now for us all but as you are aware this is an ever changing situation and I need to ensure all decisions for the school are made with the best information and guidance we can access at the time. In the meantime keep well, stay safe and enjoy the half term break with your children.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Lucy Henderson

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