



Cawston Church of England Primary Academy

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Diocese of Norwich
Education and
Academies Trust

Update: 18th May 2020 – Possible School Re-opening during June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please be prepared it's a long letter! Since I last wrote to you there have been a number of updates by the government available on their website. I will summarise the current position and guidance.

See gov.uk *Parents and Carers information*

Actions for educational and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020

Coronavirus: guidance for schools

Coronavirus: implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings

Overview of the expectations on school

- If the 5 key tests set by the government justify change then the government plans to move to 'Step 2' of their plan, not before the 1st June. At this step, the government plans to include the phased reopening of primary schools for the education of children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.
- Schools are asked to continue to provide childcare provision for priority groups (vulnerable children and children of critical workers).
- It will not be compulsory for children to attend.
- Children who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should not attend. Parents of children who have a health condition that makes them vulnerable and is at higher risk of severe illness from Coronavirus should seek and follow medical advice.



Managing risk and rate of transmission

Settings are asked to reduce contact between children and staff as far as possible by children being grouped into small groups (*protective bubbles*) and keeping that group and its adults away from any other group.

Year groups will be split into smaller groups of no more than 15. The number will depend on the size of the classroom. *Our rooms will have groups of 10 to ensure 2m space for each child.*

We are advised that groups should not mix. Children should be in the same small group at all times of each day.

- Allocate the same staff to a group and as far as possible these staff should remain the same throughout the day and on all days that the group attend.
- Ensure children use the same classroom or area throughout the day. Schools are asked to consider seating children at the same desk each day they attend. Individual desks 2m spaced.
- Thorough cleaning is crucial as always but during this time particularly in the following ways:
 1. In between group use of any shared space e.g. between sittings in the dining room if that is used or between groups attending school.
 2. Frequent cleaning of surfaces that children touch more regularly e.g. toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, etc.
 - Continue to ensure frequent and quality hand washing.
 - Ventilate rooms as much as possible.
 - Consider one-way circulation around the building or divide corridors to keep groups apart.
 - Stagger breaks and lunchtimes.
 - Use outdoor space as much as possible for exercise, breaks, and learning. (No contact sport e.g. football, basketball, catch games.)
 - Outdoor equipment should not be used unless it is appropriately cleaned between groups. Wherever possible equipment or toys which are not required should be removed and stored away.
 - Limit sharing of resources, stationery, and home-school items.

Curriculum & school day organisation

- Consider pupils' mental health and wellbeing and support pupils so they are ready to learn.
- Schools should also, at the same time, do their best to support pupils remaining at home continuing with a home learning offer, although this will be adapted as staff priorities will be for school-based groups.
- Schools are asked to provide meals for all children in school and these should be free of charge where pupils meet the free school meal eligibility criteria.

Next Steps

There have been a number of documents released and updates will continue I am sure.

I am in the process of completing risk assessments considering updates, advice, and problem-solving teamwork with the DNEAT schools and the LA. We will have updated risk assessments for the site, people and procedures in school.

However, I am concerned that we will not be able to offer full-time education to the 58 children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 as well as the key worker childcare for 30 children, whilst complying with the safety expectations in the guidelines.

The guidance is that I must prioritise attendance in the following order:

1. Provide places for priority groups (childcare for vulnerable children and children of critical workers)
2. Reception Year
3. Year 1
4. Year 6

Siblings in other year groups will not be allowed back into school until the later time of their phased return.

We want nothing more than to be able to welcome children back to school, but in reality, this is what we face:

- There are 58 children in YR, Y1 and Y6. These would need 6 classrooms (we have 7) with 6 teachers & 6 TAs as a minimum, therefore 12 adults (of which we have 8 available). Yet, these children alone have 30 siblings. What are families to do with these children?
- Add to this possibly 30+ children of key workers and this requires 6 staff.
- A number of staff classed as 'vulnerable' and may not be able to return to work.

As you can see there simply are not enough staff to do this effectively.

The school would be asked to fulfil three functions:

1. Childcare for key worker children,
2. Education in school for some year groups in small 'Bubbles' units of children and staff
3. Revised home learning for those not in school- because teachers are on school duties.

There are also 5 key measures that the National Education Union advised by the British Medical Association are seeking to keep children safe as they return to school: staff are entitled to have some questions answered.

1. *Reducing class sizes*
2. *Keeping children in small groups*
3. *Schools must be rigorous about hygiene*
4. *Covid-19 testing children, families, staff*
5. *Track, trace and isolate in place to stop virus from spreading*

Therefore, I am asking for your help in the following ways:

- Please do not make plans based on the **provisional date** given by the government. This will depend on the local school capacity as well as the scientific evidence -The R number being below 1.0. *The government will review this data at the end of May.*
- Give us the time we need to devise a plan based on guidance that we have received so far.
- Do not see a place in school as an 'entitlement' for your child, even if you are a key worker, or have children in the year groups listed. The final decision rests with the Headteachers in individual schools. This will be based on 1. Risk assessments. 2. Our capacity- staffing and classrooms. 3. The actual demand by families. 4. Prioritisation
- Please support the decisions that we make, even if they negatively affect your own arrangements.

Frequently asked questions by parents

When will we know if 'Step 2' is going ahead on the 1st June?

Not sure. All the statements and guidance talk about Step 2 **only** being applied **if** the 5 government measures are met. I haven't yet been able to find a definitive answer to this question. I will keep asking and reading the information provided. I am not sure if the government has announced the next review date. If it is 3 weeks after the last one it will be at the end of May. *I will let you know as soon as we can confirm the details and safety for pupils, families and staff.*

Is it definite? Are schools starting to reopen from the 1st June?

No. This is part of the government's Step 2 and they have made it clear that 1st June is only the *earliest date* for a phased, cautious return to school and is dependent on continued positive progress towards the 5 measures. The more we can stay alert, stay home, stay safe and minimise our risk of spreading the virus the more likely we are to be able to open during June.

Will I have to send my child to school if I am concerned about their safety?

No. The government uses the phrase 'we strongly encourage' when talking about attendance but have been clear that there will be no fines for non-attendance. As far as I am concerned it will be your choice as to whether you send your child. We will respect that.

I have a household member with a significant health concern do I have to send my child in?

There is very clear guidance on this in the parent guidance. The answer seems to depend on if the household member is 'extremely clinically vulnerable' in which case only if stringent social distancing can be adhered to.

Will the children be all together in their normal class?

No. Group sizes are not allowed to be more than 15 and will vary by the classroom size being used. Most of ours will be in groups of 10 and therefore will not necessarily be able to be with their friends or class teacher.

Will they be split over a number of classes?

No. Children will not be split into small groups across year groups. They will be following their learning pack provided by the class teacher.

If split into smaller groups who will teach them?

Teachers or teaching assistants under the direction of teachers. It will depend on staff availability. Some staff will not be able to return to work yet due to the fact that they are shielding, self-isolation, or displaying symptoms.

Will the kitchen be open to serve dinners?

Yes. Packed lunch options will be available and delivered to the classrooms so the children will not visit any communal areas and will stay with their allocated staff.

How will you keep 2m between reception and year 1 children when playing?

In class the desks and play areas are separated by 2m spaces. Play areas will be spaced out for playtimes, but you will understand this will be difficult to enforce especially with our youngest children.

How will you make sure children keep social distancing?

We will have clear rules and an updated Behaviour Policy in place to ensure children keep 2m distances, walk in one-way system in school, and keep to their own 'Bubble' for lessons and playtimes. Any child who breaks these rules will be isolated and sent home.

How will we safely drop off and pick up children in each year group?

We plan a phased reopening with smaller numbers by limiting which 'groups' enter via which gate and to adjust start and finish times. Possibly YR and Y1 entering by the field gate to their outside classrooms and Y6 entering the playground gate. Arrival times would be staggered and allocated to families based on *alphabetical surnames*. Details will be confirmed to families.

e.g. Start school 8.45, 9.00 or 9.15; End school 2.45, 3.00 or 3.15

Only one parent is allowed to bring children to school. Parents are to keep social distancing rules when arriving in the school grounds. Only one person at a time is allowed in the lobby entrance area. Any proposals will be signed off by the governors.

Will the breakfast club and after school club be reopened when schools begin their phased reopening?

Not this term. I have given this a lot of thought and the biggest challenge is being able to keep all the children who attend separated by year groups and in separate spaces.

Is it worth doing all this planning if we aren't sure it will happen?

Yes. At some point (hopefully sooner rather than later if medical science supports the decision) we will begin our phased reopening. I see the work being put into planning, preparation and problem solving to minimise risk as a positive step towards opening as safely as possible.

Will the staff and children have to wear PPE?

First aiders will use PPE when required. Adults will definitely wear PPE whilst supervising a child waiting to be collected if they are displaying symptoms associated with coronavirus. Up to this date, we have not provided face masks but are considering this as part of our risk assessment and particularly for staff supervising pupils with symptoms waiting to be collected. The link at the bottom of this letter entitled - *Coronavirus: implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings* contains more information. The government guidance is that facemasks are not advised for young children.

What do you think about reopening to these year groups?

I want our school to reopen. I want our children to be able to return to their classroom, their friends and their education. I want you to be able to return to work. I want to lift the burden of home education for you. **BUT** only when it is **SAFE** to do so. Teachers are not being obstructive or 'squabbling' and any criticism does not take into account the practicalities of managing pupils and staff in a Covid-19 secure environment. We may be living with coronavirus for a long time and want our risk management school systems to be sustainable.

I want to believe that the government has only made this proposal for 'Step 2' because the science tells them it is right, although I am left concerned by a report that the Chief Scientific Adviser for the DfE has not assessed the school reopening guidance. Comparison with other countries are interesting. In Denmark (only 533 deaths compared with UK 35,000) schools are returning but they have average class sizes of 20 so can manage groups of 10 easier.

Although children have the same level of infection they don't get as ill. There is some evidence that they are less likely to pass it on but the science about transmission is still uncertain. Children are known as 'super spreaders' for infectious diseases such as flu. Young children even pass on it easier! Is the government ready to roll out the Test, Track Trace system in sufficient numbers?

I think it is going to be a stressful and anxious time for staff, parents and pupils as we all learn to work, play and interact in this 'new normal' way. I cannot guarantee that any child will stay 2m away from another, I cannot guarantee they will be in a group with their friends, I cannot guarantee they will be in their own classroom, I cannot guarantee they will be taught by a familiar adult. Every age group presents different challenges

We are working out the logistics of a phased return with small group provision for 58 children attending classes and up to 25 in childcare places. We are also aware of the concerns and fears that our parents have of returning their children to school at this time. Whilst we will make every effort to make it as safe as we can, the conditions we are required to meet to do so will be very difficult to implement practically on a day by day basis with little people moving around.

There is not a single solution to these issues. We will use creative solutions to problems but safety considerations will guide all our planning. The guidance is contradictory and each school must find its own path based on the building they are in and the staff available.

I have spoken to parents over recent days and I want to say thank you for your patience, support and confidence in the school as we work out how we move forward. I want to maintain positive relationships with our families, so I will be fair, open and transparent at every stage.

We will survey our parents/carers about who is considering keeping their child(ren) at home and who intends to send them back into school in June. I will keep you updated as regularly as possible, as I am aware that this has massive implications for you all. Please let us know your intention by completing the short survey attached to the email.

I would also like to place on record my thanks for the amazing job the staff has done in responding to this situation. Throughout this pandemic they have been working hard with childcare duties, home learning resources and feedback to pupils. They are fully supportive of children's wellbeing and are a credit to the school and education profession. Thank you 'Team Cawston'.

Stay safe and take care.

Kind regards,

Kay Swann

Headteacher