



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

7th September 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome back to the start of the Autumn Term 2020! We are looking forward to seeing all the pupils tomorrow, but understand that this is an anxious time for you all, so wanted to give you a bit of an update.

Over the summer break, a great deal of planning and preparation has been happening to ensure our readiness to open to all children. As we have been operating throughout the pandemic with increasingly high numbers of pupils attending or accessing outreach (walking/exercise) groups, much of the Covid-19 planning is already in place and familiar to many of you. Updates to this planning have been set against guidance being released by the Government. This has been a shifting picture, as the pandemic progresses, so we have left final updates for as long as possible in order to reflect the most recent advice and guidance and the infection rate for our area.

One of the major changes to our schools is that we have opened a separate facility in Dartington (The Hex), for some of our most medically vulnerable pupils from both schools, where they will attend for the next academic year. My thanks to the staff who have done so much over the summer to get this facility ready for the start of term.

The Government is clear that schools must get back to as near-normal as possible with all children attending full time. As has been the case throughout this crisis, the safety and wellbeing of both children and staff remain the utmost priority, so sensible precautions must be taken, even though we are living in an area deemed to be “low risk” in terms of the number of infections.

Should there be an increase in infection rates, the schools will revert to one of the two ways of working that were in place during last term.

1. During the full lockdown, we were operating with very tiny, very strictly controlled “Bubbles”. In the event of a major spike in infections and local lockdown, we would use this model, opening only for children of key workers and the most vulnerable.
2. After half term, these “Bubbles” were able to increase in size but there were still heavy restrictions on activities and movement. This would be the model we would use to work our way out of any lockdown or to respond to an increase in infections leading to heavier restrictions but falling short of total lockdown. With this model, most pupils could potentially come to school, but not full time, needing to share the spaces to allow for much smaller groups.

As it stands, we are intending to open the schools to all pupils, full time. We have collated some key points to describe some of the adaptations to make this possible.

- **Hygiene is key.** Very frequent hand washing is vital, with use of hand gel in between. Staff will use hand gel before and after touching shared equipment (such as the photocopier) and will wipe down the surfaces of shared items when staff or pupils have used them, with the sanitiser sprays or wipes provided. Pupils will be supported to wash their hands throughout the day.

Of all the advice, this is the most important and the most likely to protect everyone from infection.

- **We will check temperatures at the start of every day and if we suspect someone has developed a temperature during the day.** Every class base and reception area will be allocated a forehead thermometer. Every member of staff and pupil will have their temperature checked on arrival at school. If a reading seems high, (ie 37.8°C or above), an ear thermometer will be used to double-check. If a high temperature is confirmed, the pupil or member of staff must go home immediately and book to have a Covid-19 test. They must not return unless the test comes back negative. If positive, let school know as we will immediately contact Public Health England for Track & Trace advice and actions.
- **If your child is unwell, please keep them at home and please provide an overview of their symptoms on the message.** We can then decide whether we should inform Public Health England/the DfE and whether you should be booking a test.
- **Staff will only collect pupils from their own class from the buses and will use the entrance allocated to the class.** Realistically, we cannot eliminate children being in contact with each other, but we can limit it as much as possible. Only taking their own pupils to class reduces the number of different contacts and the extent to which staff are moving between classes. Some staff need to move between classes, so we must reduce the extent of movement where it is not necessary to make it more possible for those staff who have essential whole-school roles, to work in different groups.
- **Staff will use the PPE provided (aprons, gloves, blue masks) when carrying out personal/intimate care, moving and handling involving prolonged close contact or when supporting an unwell pupil or colleague.** Staff will also use a face covering when on school buses or when in a small space where social distancing is not possible. Staff have been reminded to be cautious and use their common sense in not allowing lots of staff and pupils to congregate in small spaces. Everyone knows they must be prepared to intervene and remind people of the need for social distancing.
- **Staff meetings will be on Teams or Skype.** We must limit the amount of contact between adults in order to minimise the cross-infection risk and help to keep our schools open.
- **Sick bay areas will be allocated in each building.** If a pupil or colleague is taken ill during the day, they need to be taken to a designated area, while waiting to be collected or taken home. This needs to happen as soon as possible. Pupils at The Hex will be taken home immediately by the staff team.
- **Playtime spaces and times and lunch collection times are all timetabled.** Pupils will continue to eat in their classrooms at the moment, rather than in communal areas. At playtimes, they will only mix with children from their Key Stage “Bubble”.

- **The use of shared areas/rooms will be timetabled.** This includes The Hub areas, library etc. Classes will only use or access these areas during their allocated slot and surfaces and equipment will be wiped down by staff when they have finished using the shared area.
- **Hydrotherapy pools will not be re-opening just yet.** There has been further guidance, but we still consider this to be a highly risky activity and we are still working on how it can be done safely. Until we are satisfied that it is safe, the pools will remain closed.
- **Some staff need to move between sites, schools and bubbles.** In order to run fully operational, high quality provision, some staff need to work in more than one area. This may be to provide specialist input, therapy, safeguarding, monitoring or training. By reducing the number of unnecessary movement between groups, we will continue to ensure those staff who need to, can move about between areas. They will ensure social distancing, good hygiene and use of appropriate PPE if their role involves close contact with pupils. HLTAs have been allocated to Key Stages, so although they are covering in a number of classes, they will remain in the Key Stage bubble. It is worth remembering that even if each of our school site was a bubble, it would be smaller than the number of pupils in many mainstream bubbles, so our numbers are always low, even though it feels a lot busier than last term. Staff moving regularly between classes are asked not to participate in intimate care, feeding or moving and handling as far as possible, in order to reduce the risk of cross-infection. Timetables are being adjusted so that staff with whole-school specialist roles are not moving between Key Stage “bubbles” on any given day.
- **Parents’ Evening this term will be virtual or telephone meetings.** We will assess this each term – it may need to continue for longer. Annual reviews will also be held via virtual or telephone meetings, but we are hoping to invite parents in, with other guests joining via Teams, Skype or telephone conference call.
- **There will be no whole school events this term.** We have started thinking about how we may offer virtual celebrations, rather than the usual crowded halls for certain events at the end of this term!
- **There will not be any work experience, inclusion or visits to indoor venues,** until we can be certain that the risk is minimal. At present, we are planning on outdoor activities only for off-site visits but we will keep this under review. Residential trips are not allowed.
- **Flu vaccines will be available to all staff who want it, free of charge and we encourage families to take up the flu vaccine for pupils.** We urge as many pupils and staff as possible to be vaccinated against seasonal flu – we really don’t need this as well as Covid-19!

We look forward to seeing the pupils again tomorrow.



Jacqui Warne – Executive Head