



# ST. MARY'S R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr D Miller

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

I hope you are all well but I am sure for many of you, this week has been filled with worry and anxiety. As you know, the government are hoping to be in a position where schools can reopen for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from June 1st. When taking into account the key worker children who we offer essential childcare for, this could equate to over 100 children in school.

I am sure you will understand that it would be foolish and not at all in keeping with health and safety advice for us to open our doors at 9:00am on the 1st June and have over 100 children and families come into school all at once. So, we are currently working our way through a mountain of risk assessments and practicalities. Schools across Durham are taking very different approaches, with some not able to offer for all year groups, others capping each year group at a particular number, half day timetables and so on. **Decisions are being made on staffing numbers, building capacity and risk assessments.** I appreciate the wait for clarity must be extremely stressful for some as you have your own plans to make regarding returning to work but **the Prime Minister did indicate that if parents had childcare issues their employers would have to accept this as a barrier to returning to work.**

In order for us to make our final decisions about what we can safely offer, it would be extremely helpful if all parents of children in the key groups (Rec, Yr 1, Yr 6) could complete the a form (which will follow by text message) indicating whether they feel (at this point) they will be sending their child/children to school. You may feel you cannot make a decision without further information about what school will look like but if you could indicate tentatively, this does not mean you cannot change your mind. Once we have an indication of numbers, I will be in touch with further detail and how this will be managed for families where one child is accessing school as a key worker child and the other accessing school as a key year group child.

I appreciate the list below may cause more anxiety as you come to terms with the fact that school will look very different for your children but we must follow all guidance and advice on how we maintain the safety and well-being of our whole school community during



this very difficult time. We hope that some of these restrictions will ease over time but in the first instance:

- Children will be 'cocooned' in groups of no more than 15.
- They will stay with this group all day, every day, as children should not be mixing and we need to trace who they are in contact with whilst in school so we can inform Public Health should a case of Covid-19 be detected in a child or staff member.
- If a person within the 'cocoon' tests positive for Covid-19, the whole group **MUST** self-isolate for 14 days.
- The group will be made up of pupils from the same year group.
- Each group (of no more than 15) will be based in the same classroom but obviously one teacher cannot teach in two rooms at the same time so your child may not be with their class teacher.
- Your child, therefore, may not be in their 'old' classroom.
- Your child may not be with their 'best' friends. Groupings will not be altered under any circumstances.
- The children will all enter school and exit at staggered periods. This will be strictly adhered to as we cannot accept siblings at the same time. This is to minimise mixing in corridors.
- Coats will be kept in the classrooms so children are not mixing in cloakrooms.
- Children will have what they need on their desks so there is minimal movement around the classroom, washing hands and accessing toilet facilities excepted.
- Early Years will have all soft furnishings, teddies and equipment which carries a greater risk of virus transmission removed e.g. sand trays etc...
- Social distancing will be adhered to around toilet areas with new markings on the floor.
- Children will be asked to wash their hands regularly throughout the day in classrooms.
- All equipment will be asked for at the end of the day.
- Outdoor play areas will be closed to decrease the risk of first aid
- Staff administering first aid or care needs will be required to wear PPE.
- Parents will not be permitted to enter the school building at any point during the school day (all communication must be done via the school office).
- Each group will be timetabled to access the outdoor area (again so there is no mixing) this will also allow us to clean the classrooms throughout the day. However, play must be in isolation.
- Children must bring a packed lunch with them, or a school packed lunch can be provided (normal daily charge applies) made by the school kitchen, as we will not be accessing the dining hall.
- There will be no assemblies or gatherings.
- There will be no breakfast club or after school club as we are unable to staff this and we are not allowed to mix groups within school.
- Whilst the government have announced they want teachers in School teaching, they have also said they want teachers to continue to provide home learning (we are currently working our way through how that will look).



I really do appreciate this may seem quite scary for some children and families but the decision lies with parents. The government have announced that this is not compulsory and parents will not be fined for making a decision not to send their child to school. As Headteacher, but also as a parent with 3 primary aged children myself, I recognise the need for children to be in school learning but also recognise the fact that I must feel confident, as must any parent, that children are safe. I fully support the decision of any parent who does not send their child to school if they do not feel it is safe.

As mentioned, once we have tentative numbers I will be in touch with how we plan to stagger the children into school and what we can safely offer as a school.

[A Link to the survey will follow in a text message for Parents of Reception, Year 1 & Year 6 children only.](#)

Finally, can I say that as a school, we have tried very hard to offer the very best childcare provision during this lockdown period. I am not aware of another school locally who has exceeded our 8:00am - 5:00pm offer from day 1, which has been inclusive of all bank holidays and recognised school holiday periods. St Mary's has done, and will continue to do, everything we can to support key workers, provide the very best education for our children and help restart the economy. However, I hope you will all appreciate, this does not mean that I will cut any corners with regards to pupil safety or staff safety. If staff numbers, building capacity or risk assessments indicate that it is not safe to reopen the school, then unfortunately that will be the decision that I have to take.

Thank you all for your understanding and patience during this very difficult time. I will be in touch very soon with our final offer.

Best Wishes,  
#staysafe

David Miller

