



ST. MARY'S R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Returning to School - September

Dear Parents & Carers,

Apologies for the lengthy letter, I wanted you to have as much information as possible. Before we know it, it will be September and we will be welcoming our children back into school and embracing our 'new normal'. Whilst this is somewhat far away at the moment, we want you all to be as prepared for the new term as is possible under the current circumstances. A school is a community and sadly for too long now we have not been able to be together. Before I tell you about what's coming next, we should take a moment to remind ourselves about the amazing things we have achieved together since lockdown began:

- ✓ Our children and families have been safe.
- ✓ Every child who requested a place in a bubble was granted one - no child has been turned down.
- ✓ We have supported all key workers and vulnerable children throughout lockdown, including bank holidays and all official school holiday periods.
- ✓ Our online learning has grown and grown so children and teachers have been able to keep in contact and have fun together.
- ✓ Home learning packs have helped children work at home.
- ✓ We have had 3-year groups back in school and all were welcomed back at the same time
- ✓ Google Classroom has been amazing and everyone has loved using it!

Thank you so much for all of your support during lockdown. The staff have really appreciated your comments and kind words, which have kept us all going since March.

As you might know, we have been given **new guidance from the DFE** and we have taken time to consider it and our approach moving forward and wanted to just give you an update. **Please remember that all information is subject to change and the DFE will be issuing us reviewed guidance in August.**



The great news is that all children will be welcomed back to school in September. We are enjoying having children back in the building and they have managed it very well indeed. Also, whilst many of you are doing a fantastic job at home, especially with mixed age-groups and work to contend with, you will also realise that, being in school, is important to children's progress academically and socially. I greatly admire and appreciate everything that you are managing to do and the staff are really motivated by photos of children and their work or by hearing from you about how children are.

So how will it work?

I fully appreciate that parents may have reservations about sending their children back into school. We will be putting in place a number of protective measures, based on all the available guidance, to manage the risks and protect the health, safety and wellbeing of our children, staff and families. I hope that the details outlined in this letter will answer your questions about reopening and provide reassurance.

Attendance

Returning to school in September is no longer optional, therefore, all children will be expected to do so. As this is a mandatory return, fines will be in place for those failing to do so without good reason. If your child is unable to return to school in September it is essential you contact the school office immediately.

Bubbles

Children will return to their new classes and each class will become a 'bubble'. Children will remain with their bubble at all times and will not mix bubbles. Teachers will be allowed to move across bubbles in order to deliver the curriculum.

Early Bird

From September, we will be offering one session per week for your child to come into school at **8:30am** and work in a small group of 6 children to focus on reading skills. We want all our children to be fluent readers and have excellent inference skills - not to pass SAT tests but because it is an essential life skill that will unlock opportunities in the future. Further details regarding your child's Early Bird day will be sent out during the school holidays.

Start and Finish Times

School officially re-opens on Wednesday 2nd September 2020.

Please ensure your child arrives at school on time as lateness does affect their attendance and persistent lateness will be addressed through our established systems. In order to ease congestion on the school premises we will be staggering drop off and pick up times. Please can we ask parents to drop and collect their child at the allocated time and leave the site promptly. If you have more than one child in school and are going to struggle with multiple drop offs, we ask that you please drop off and collect at the latest of the two times. We will review this on a fortnightly basis. I appreciate some families have children in different year groups but we are unable to accommodate every



family's individual circumstances. It is vital the times and locations are adhered to and families leave the premises quickly.

It would be greatly appreciated if you do not arrive earlier than your allocated time slot and once you have collected your child/children please leave the premises immediately so we can monitor the number of people on site. If we feel we need to change these times to avoid too many people being on the premises we will do so. It is vital you do not use the drop off and collection times to linger on the premises unnecessarily.

Year	Drop Off Time	Entry	Exit	Collection Time
R	8:55am	KS1 Yard Gate	Infant Yard Gate	3:15pm
1	9:05am	KS1 Yard Gate	Infant Yard Gate	3:25pm
2	9:00am	KS1 Yard Gate	Infant Yard Gate	3:20pm
3	8:55am	KS2 Yard Gate	KS2 Yard Gate	3:15pm
4	9:00am	KS2 Yard Gate	KS2 Yard Gate	3:20pm
5	9:05am	KS2 Yard Gate	KS2 Yard Gate	3:25pm
6	8:50am	KS2 Yard Gate	KS2 Yard Gate	3:10am

Dropping Off and Picking Up

Unless restrictions change between now and September, you should assume that we will retain our rules around dropping off and picking up your child/children so would appreciate it if these rules were adhered to it at all times.

Only one adult should be on school premises. Should you need to bring a younger sibling then please ensure they always stay with you. It is essential that the one-way system is followed. Parents will not be allowed inside the school building so please do not attempt to enter the main reception for any reason. Should you need to speak to Mrs Pinkerton our School Support Manager or myself please call 01207 502657 or email blackhillstmary@durhamlearning.net

It is essential that whilst on our school premises you fully adhere to the social distancing guidelines in place. Therefore, please be aware that gates and yards will not be opened until the specified times stated above. Children who walk to school independently should not access the school premises before their allocated time.

Public Transport

If you do have to use public transport, please can we request that you dispose of face masks prior to entering the school grounds. There will be a lidded bin at each gate.



Bikes and Scooters

To reduce congestion at the beginning and end of the day, we would encourage children to walk to school with one family member. If your child does come to school on a bike or scooter, please can they be left in the allocated space (at the bottom of the steps as you approach the main entrance - wall on the left). Please note that this area does not have a shelter. Please can I remind parents/carers that children should dismount prior to entering the school site.

Resources

- Children will have their own equipment and no classes will share resources.
- Each class will have their own set of class reading books.
- Reading books will be sent home on a Monday and a Thursday.
- From Year 1 - 6, each child will be provided with their own pencil case.
- **No equipment is permitted from home other than a water bottle.**

Lunch Time

These will be staggered in bubbles and children will eat with their class. Some classes will eat in their classrooms. Children will not have access to the salad bar, so instead a side salad and a piece of bread will be provided for every child. Please note that the cost of a school meal is £2.10. If your child is moving from Year 2 to Year 3 please be aware you now have to pay for your child's meals. If they no longer require a school lunch please send notification via email.

If your child has packed lunch, please ensure any packed lunch box and water bottle can be easily cleaned and this is done every evening. Our healthy packed lunch guidelines will remain unchanged.

School Uniform

After careful consideration children will be expected to wear full school uniform in September. We feel it is important for them to return to as much 'normality' as possible when they return. We want to reinstate the sense of belonging, that some may feel they have lost, given how much time they have been away and feel uniform will be something that will help us achieve this.

To reduce the number of personal belongings in school we are asking children to come into school on their PE day wearing their PE Kit (black tracksuit bottoms and a black hoody are essential items here - **branded T-shirts or football strips are not permitted**). PE days are:

Monday: Year 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Tuesday: Year 6

Wednesday: Year 1 and 2

Thursday: Year 3 and 5

Friday: Year 4



Our uniform consists of a burgundy jumper or cardigan, blue polo shirt, grey 'school' trousers or skirt. 'School' shoes should also be worn as opposed to black trainers. **Can we please request that, if your child is unable to tie their own shoe laces, that shoes with Velcro straps are purchased.** We must stress, a school badge jumper or T-shirt is not compulsory and so parents should never feel pressured to purchase this.

All of the above listed uniform items can be found locally at Asda, Sainsburys, Marks & Spencer and Matalan.

All items of clothing and belongings must be clearly labelled; children will be expected to look after their belongings and staff will not be allowed to hunt for items that children have lost and misplaced. Lost property and unlabelled items will be disposed of.

Child Wellbeing

Please let the school know if your child has experienced trauma or bereavement during the lockdown as we have trained practitioners in school who will be able to support and help these children. We would like to support all the children as best we can. We are prioritising PSHE and wellbeing as part of our curriculum. Please contact the school office if you feel you would like this support.

Appointment Needed in School

If you need to speak to a member of staff we are encouraging these to take place by phone or video call if possible. If there is an essential issue then please make an appointment by calling the school office.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Cleaning and hygiene will remain our top priority. We have implemented a number of strategies for ensuring that children and staff understand the importance: -

- The toilets will be cleaned at regular points throughout the day.
- Children will sanitise their hands, on arrival at school, before and after break and lunchtime and at the end of the day.
- At the end of the day all resources, tables and classrooms will have a hygiene clean.
- Hand sanitiser stations have been installed outside every classroom. Please inform the school office if your child is unable to use hand sanitiser.
- All classrooms will have a bin with a lid.
- There are posters situated around the school reminding children of the 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' culture.

Medicines

Please can we ask for parents to bring any medicines back to school in September and complete a medical form, which is located on the school website (under Information /Forms).



Breakfast Club

We are aware that parents depend on our breakfast and after school club provision and that this group is usually made up of children from all year groups. So that we can continue to operate the breakfast and after school club, we will split the children into three larger groups (Bubble 1 = Reception, Bubble 2 = Years 1, 2 and 3, Bubble 3 = Years 4, 5 and 6) within the hall, Prayer Room and ICT suite. This way, we will be able to keep track of who has been in contact with other children outside of their year group. If children play outside during the club times, they will be kept apart from each other.

We will shortly be sending out a Google Form for you to indicate the precise requirements that you will need for your child for the first two weeks of September. **Please note that this will not guarantee your place.** We anticipate that the numbers wishing to access the provision will far exceeds our capacity based on the new risk assessments for full reopening in September. This will be set at a maximum of 10 children in any group. **The revised starting time for breakfast club will be 7:55am.**

If the numbers exceed our capacity in any group we will have to look at implementing an oversubscription-criteria where children of key workers will take priority and if numbers remain too high, only offering places to families where both parents are key workers and then finally offering places based upon who returns the forms first.

I know that this is not ideal but this really is the very best offer that we can make. Apologises in advance if anyone is disappointed.

Test and Trace

It is very important that we control any outbreak of Covid-19 in our school, therefore, should this happen, all staff and children will be required to engage with the Test and Trace process.

Should a member of staff or child develop symptoms whilst in school they will be sent home to self-isolate and are required to undertake a Covid-19 test. To avoid any confusion, this is something you will be required to arrange, school will not do this on your behalf.

If a member of your child's household tests positive for Covid-19 you have a duty to inform us. School closures, either full or partial, will only be decided by the Public Health England team who we will liaise with should any of the above occur.

Classes for September

Year on year there is huge anticipation surrounding class teachers for a new academic year. This year is made more difficult as we are unable to engage in our very successful internal transition programme. That said, once the new academic year starts our staff will work tirelessly to ensure your little one settles into their new class and surroundings.



A lot of thought and planning goes into class allocations. Please be mindful, whilst your child might not be with their 'favourite teacher' they will be placed with a teacher that best suits their academic needs. Classes for September 2020 are as follows:

Class	Teacher	Teaching Assistant Support
Reception	Mrs Roe	Mrs Greer
Year 1	Mrs Thompson & Mrs Ewart	Miss Bainbridge & Mrs Sharpe
Year 2	Mrs Davison	Mrs Curran
Year 3	Mrs Ross	Mrs Martin
Year 4	Mr Pryer	Mrs Martin & Mrs Maxwell
Year 5	Miss Hughes	Mrs Sharpe
Year 6	Mr Richardson	Mrs Crawley

Curriculum

In September, we will spend a significant period of time on personal, social and emotional development and the wellbeing of children. We anticipate that some may struggle with social engagement and settling back into friendships. Initial activities will focus on building up a strong sense of belonging within the class, easing the children back into routines, re-establishing school rules and spend time discussing worries and concerns. We also want to focus heavily on the positives that a new year brings, the good things that have come out of this experience and our hopes and aspirations for the year.

Extra-curricular time has been allocated for core subjects (English and Maths) to allow for 'filling the gaps' in learning from the previous year and re-establishing good progress. The children will experience a broad and varied curriculum to inspire and engage them. Your support in getting children back on track will be vital and I ask that you continue to promote reading and number facts/times table recall throughout the summer break to give children a flying start in September.

Final Thoughts

I would like to thank you all for your patience and understanding throughout this challenging time. Next year will see a different way of working and your continued understanding will be greatly appreciated. There is no one tried and tested method for us to use and we will need to reflect upon, evaluate and adjust our procedures as we move forward I'm sure.

Finally, I would like to thank my amazing team. They have been incredible throughout all of this, balancing teaching in the midst of a pandemic, preparing remote learning and working from home whilst juggling their own family lives. They have stepped up to every new challenge without question and worked through weekends and holidays to make the best of this very different situation. The Caretaker, cleaners and school cook have all been invaluable - their work often goes unseen but is essential to the smooth running of the school. Thank you everyone!



Please be assured that an immense amount of care and consideration has gone into every decision we have made. That said, if there are questions we still haven't answered or you have any new concerns, please contact us by giving us a call or emailing the school at blackhillstmary@durhamlearning.net We continue to be incredibly grateful for your support during this challenging time and are very much looking forward to welcoming you back to school in September. We know the future is daunting but please be reassured that as always, we will make sure our children are safe and happy when they walk back through our doors.

I hope you all have a wonderful (albeit different) summer and look forward to seeing each and every one of you in September.

Best wishes,
#staysafe



Mr D. Miller
Headteacher

