

10 July 2020

Dear Parents / Carers

I hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well.

Firstly, I want to thank you for your unwavering support during these unprecedented times and the integral role that you continue to play in supporting us as we edge towards a new normal in our schools. We do not underestimate the challenges that busy parents have faced during these last few months.

Last week the Department of Education announced that all schools will reopen for pupils from the beginning of September. The Government has issued schools with advice about how we can open in September at minimal risk to pupils and to staff, now that the prevalence of COVID has decreased. Current restrictions on class sizes will be lifted, but schools will be expected to keep children in class or year group 'bubbles' to minimise the number of daily contacts with others that each pupil has. Protective measures, such as regular cleaning and handwashing, will, of course, continue. We, supported by the local authority, are putting rigorous procedures in place to minimise the likelihood of viral transmission, and respond to any positive COVID cases. Testing will be widely available, and we will alert parents should concerns arise. Appropriate actions will be taken in the case of any outbreak, and remote education will be made available to any pupils who might have to self-isolate.

The Government's decision has been driven by a decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, together with the "test and trace" system now being up and running. The risk to children of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low and we know there are negative, and sometimes lasting, health and educational impacts for pupils who are out of school for long periods. It is with this in mind that the government's guidance states that pupils will be expected to attend as normal come September. A small number of pupils may still be unable to attend because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19.

Shielding advice will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of COVID transmission. This means that those pupils who remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Some pupils who are not required to shield, but who remain under the care of a specialist medical professional, may need to discuss their care with that professional before returning. Please advise us if the guidance you receive is that your child should remain at home. Other than in these exceptional cases, or where a pupil's absence is otherwise authorised, the expectation is that pupils attend as normal.

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For the full report please click the link below:

[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

We are currently working with a range of outside bodies to ensure we are ready to welcome all our pupils back in September. Pupil safety is at the forefront of all decisions being made. All necessary measures are being put in place to make the school environment as safe as we possibly can, however, as I am sure you can appreciate we cannot guarantee that your child will not be exposed to the virus at school as this is beyond our control. Please be assured we are taking all reasonable steps to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level in line with DfE Guidance.

The government has put in place interim arrangements to the legislation that has allowed the local authority to implement easements on the duty to provide aspects of an EHCP and make reasonable endeavours to provide as much support as possible. It is expected that this legislation will return to normal expectations and EHCP's will be returned to normal as quickly as possible. However, some services will still need to be retained to support the pandemic, so there may still be a restriction on face to face support provided by health, therapy and other services. All services are working hard to continue to offer as much support as possible and where appropriate offer remote support and interventions.

We are in discussions with the Local Authority about transport and how this will look in September. If your child usually comes in on the school bus, but you are in a position to bring them yourselves, we would strongly encourage you to do so. This is the safest option for your child as it reduces the amount of contact they will have with others. We appreciate, for some, this may not be possible, and we would like to remind you if you wish your child to have a place on school transport you need to make an application directly to the Local Authority.

We will share our full September opening plans with you before the end of term. As you are aware guidelines are continuously changing and being reviewed. The 6 weeks Summer holiday is approaching and things may change during this time. We will of course keep you updated if, as and when things change. Please continue to check our school website for the most recent guidance.

As a school community , we will continue to do all we can to support parents and pupils prepare for September – and beyond. Thank you, again, for everything you are doing.

Yours faithfully,

Antony Clements
Interim Headteacher