

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



HEAD TEACHER: MRS. A. D. THORPE

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS: MRS. C. HORSLEY

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19th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you are all aware the Government has announced that schools should plan for the gradual reopening of schools from 1st June. There is a vast amount of speculation and commentary that has been circulating in the press following this announcement. We know that many of our parents have expressed serious concerns regarding the potential return to school and hope that this detailed letter addresses some of these immediate concerns and questions.

The safety and well-being of our pupils is of the utmost priority to all of us, here at St Joseph's. As we look to move into the next phase of the national effort against COVID-19 please be assured that all of the Governors and staff place the health and well-being of your child first and foremost. The staff and pupil's welfare are at the centre of our plans to re-open school. Firstly, we think it is important to note that this initial stage of reopening is intended to be a 'phased return of some children from 1st June, at the earliest'. The year groups indicated in Government guidance are Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 with an 'ambition' for other pupils to follow. We would like to emphasise that the staff and Governors want nothing more than to be able to return to school and get back to normality; the staff of St Joseph's are wonderful, dedicated and hardworking members of our Parish community. Everyone, pupils and staff alike have in their own way found it extremely difficult to be away from the routine, structure and joy that working with your children on a daily basis brings. Nevertheless, we must ensure that this return does not jeopardise the safety of our children, families and staff.

The reopening of school is an operational decision that will consider the Department for Education guidance, Local Authority advice and the context of our school. There is not one size fits all approach to reopening and every school will approach this in a different way. This decision will be made by the school leadership with the backing of the Full Governing Body of St Joseph's. A full and comprehensive risk assessment is currently being carried out and it will be reviewed and agreed by the Full Governing Body before any final decision to phase the re-opening of school is made. The risk assessment will determine whether or not it is safe for pupils and staff to return to school. At St Joseph's we envisage that Reception will be the first group of pupils to return. It is essential for all our families to be aware that we will not be reopening at 9am on the 1st June for all Year 6, Year 1, Reception and critical worker children all at once. We are planning a systematic and phased return by invited groups, bit by bit, to ensure all of the staff and pupils health and well-being is maintained. Key worker children will continue



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to need to be booked into school on a weekly basis to ensure that school can maintain safe adult:child ratio's.

Previously, we have welcomed our children with open arms, care and love, all children are greeted with a huge smile and staff pride themselves on knowing all their pupils individually. So, it is with a heavy heart that we need to be clear, any return to school will undoubtedly look very different to what we recognise as 'normal school.' Whilst of course the love and care will never diminish, there are many factors that will need to be considered when carrying out the risk assessment and planning. It is important that parents know this when making their decision to send their child in or not:

Pupils:

- 'lessons' will not cover new learning so as not to disadvantage any pupils not in school
- there will be no personalised 1-2-1 intervention as social distancing makes this too challenging for pupils to engage with at this time and with the number of reduced class sizes there are not enough staff to facilitate it
- timetables will be adapted, with staggered start and finish times
- class sizes will be vastly reduced; children will be placed into 'bubble' groups who will stay together all day, every day, to prevent mixing to enable effective tracking and tracing
- children are unlikely to be in their familiar classroom or with their familiar adult/s
- classrooms will have tables set out to support social distancing wherever possible
- children will not be able to be with all of their friendship group and once the 'bubble' is created there will be no pupil moved in or out for any reason
- parents will not be able to request their child is in a certain group with a particular friend or staff member
- children will have the opportunity for outdoor play within their 'bubble' group but this will be within social distancing guidelines and no equipment will be used
- staff will teach pupils and encourage them how to socially distance within the whole school environment
- there will be no assemblies, Collective Worship, gatherings, visits or group activities of any kind (i.e. end of year celebrations, sports' day, mass etc.)
- children will be advised to come to school in freshly washed uniform each day
- each bubble will eat together in their allocated room



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- children will be need to bring a packed lunch in a disposable bag
- a packed lunch can be provided which will be charged at the normal rate accessible through Parentpay
- children eligible for a free school meal will be provided with a packed lunch
- universal school meals (Reception and Year 1 pupils will be entitled to a free packed lunch but it will have to be ordered through Parentpay)
- currently there will be no hot meals served
- there will be lots of supervised handwashing and comfort breaks allocated throughout the day
- children will not be permitted to bring any items from home (except a named water bottle and a packed lunch in a disposable bag)
- they will be given a small plastic bag/tray containing their learning resources personal to them which will remain in school
- they will be given an allocated seat and place at a desk and this will be their 'spot'
- we will not be able to offer extended provision (breakfast or after school clubs)
- the school day will be shortened to accommodate staggered drop off and pick up times
- our behaviour policy will be updated to reflect new rules and routines necessary to reduce risk
- children who are unable to adhere to these new rules will not be allowed to remain in school
- if a child or adult within a 'bubble' shows symptoms and/or tests positive for COVID-19, the whole 'bubble' and their families will need to self-isolate for 14 days

Parents:

- strict social distancing will be maintained throughout the school premises wherever possible; this will include the new school entrance points
- pupils will need to be dropped off at specified entrances at specified times to help support parents in their social distancing and the staggered and phased return of pupils in an orderly way
- parents are advised to bring pupils to school either on foot, bicycle or by car and wherever possible avoid public transport
- It is advised that the same adult drop off and pick up each day to reduce social contact
- parents will not be allowed onto the school site and social distancing will still apply outside the school premises
- communication with school must be via phone or email and parents will only be able to enter the school site if specifically invited by a staff member



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- parents/carers will not be able to accompany their child onto the school site

Additionally, we need to make parents aware that should we be unable to maintain adequate staffing levels due to illness or self-isolation then the phased return to school would be slowed or stopped to ensure that pupils and staff's safety and welfare is not compromised. This plan of phased return will be flexible and continue to evolve based on number of pupils and available staff. Parents/carers need to be aware that it is continually open to change.

We will, of course, continue to provide emergency childcare for children of critical workers, who have been in school every day since Monday 23rd March 2020. They will operate within a single 'bubble' unit. Staff will continue to provide ongoing support for all children still at home using our school website and the wide variety of online platforms; this work will be the same as what is being done in school, so as not to disadvantage those who currently choose not to attend school.

Your input into this planning is extremely important. Yesterday, we sent out an initial Survey Monkey to R, Y1 and Y6 parents and lots of you were undecided, we completely understand that many parents will not want to send their child back to school at the moment and will be concerned about the implications; be reassured that, should you decide not to send your child back at the moment, you will not be fined for non-attendance. In order to further help us, in light of this new and detailed information, we would like to once again ask only parents in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to complete another Survey Monkey to help us with calculating numbers and staffing ratios. If your child is invited back to school in the summer term, would you send them? The link will be sent via text message. If you have more than one child, please complete a separate survey for each child.

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to provide you with details of when your child will be in at this point or the numbers we envisage being able to accommodate each day. We know that this is extremely difficult for families. School staff are in a similar position and we fully understand how stressful this is. This is only the beginning of our gradual return to normality, there is a long way to go, many questions remain unanswered and we may face further lockdowns and/or partial closures in the future.



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Further information will be provided in due course. Please work with us as we move forward and always remember that safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of our children, families and staff rests at the heart of all decisions that we take.

The Staff and Governors appreciate all of your continued support through what is a difficult and challenging time. We are keeping our whole community in our prayers, meanwhile may God Bless all of you and your families.

Yours Sincerely,

A D Thorpe

Mrs A D Thorpe
Headteacher

C Horsley

Mrs C Horsley
Chair of Governors

P Gibson

Mrs P Gibson
Vice Chair of Governors

