

St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary School

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"St Mary's is a good school" - Ofsted July 2016

Our Vision

To be a learning community that promotes the unique gifts, wellbeing and potential of every person. Our work is founded on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, building on His message of equality, peace and justice, guided by His words 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (John 13:34).



Monday 24th August 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

UK COVID-19 Government guidance update

Welcome back to our new school year, it has been a challenging few months for everyone but we are so excited that we can finally welcome all of our children back to school. We hope that you, your family and friends have remained safe and well. All school staff and governors are well.

As we are sure you are aware, the UK Government continues to review guidance around the country's Coronavirus recovery strategy. Central to the Government's plans for recovery is that schools are to fully re-open in September. It is their plan that all pupils in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

The latest guidance for parents can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>. This document will also answer a range of questions you may have regarding potential issues such as siblings, attendance, travel and testing. I have also attached a booklet *School handbook for parents which contains further guidance*.

Headlines

The main headline to be taken from the latest guidance is undoubtedly the return to school from September for all children. The government have made it clear that this will only happen on the proviso that the essential measures are in place as advised by Public Health. The school will follow the Public Health advice, published by the government to minimise Covid-19 risk, including:

- A requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- A robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements
- Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- Formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school whenever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

Organisation

Over the last few weeks, we have been working tirelessly to try and meet the Government's requests. As you can imagine when planning and organising the possible return children (in the first instance), there will be an almost endless list of steps to consider. Some of the considerations recommended by the Government include:

- grouping children together
- avoiding contact between groups
- staff maintaining distance
- staggered break times (including lunch)
- staggered drop-off and collection times
- organising pick-up protocols that minimise adult to adult contact
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks

This is in addition to:

- considering how to keep groups of children together throughout the day and to avoid larger groups of children mixing
- considering how play equipment is used ensuring it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously
- removing soft furnishings, soft toys and equipment which are hard to clean

What does this mean for my child?

When your child returns to school it will be very different to the school they left. The Government guidance states:

- Ensure that the same teacher(s) are assigned to each group – with the exception of phonics which is taught in smaller groups and sports which will be taught by our sports coach.
- Ensure that wherever possible children and young people use the same classroom or area of a setting throughout the day
- Reduce mixing within school – this means each group will have a different playtime and a different lunchtime.
- Use outside space – this means children should be prepared for outdoor learning in all weathers.
- Reduce the use of shared resources
- Adjust transport arrangements where necessary – this means there may be different start and finish times for different groups.

Health, safety and well-being

On any return to school, our first priority will be to ensure the health, safety and well-being of our children and staff. This will be a huge effort for all concerned as the guidance states:

‘for children old enough they should be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest children’

When the guidance is fully implemented, many of the routines, lessons, aesthetics and relationships our children have come to know and love will be very different. We hope you will take the time to prepare your own child for this. One thing that will certainly not change is the love, care and nurture they will receive from each and every member of my staff. They make your children happy and they will continue to do so during this transitional period.

Summary

As communicated at the end of last term, in order to support our children’s wellbeing, we have carefully planned a phased return to school. Each class will be split in half (15 children) and will attend as follows:

- Group A – Monday 7th & Tuesday 8th September
- Group B – Thursday 10th & Friday 11th September
- All children to attend school from Monday 14th September
- **Nursery and Reception children will have a different arrangement of start dates and this will be communicated separately.**

An information booklet will be sent with details of which group your children are in with their start dates and times. There will also be further details of the measures that we will be putting in place to minimise risk and welcome all of our children back to St Mary’s.

Yours faithfully

Christine Bernard
Headteacher