



Friday, 22nd May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As you know, the government has signalled its intention to allow schools to reopen to further children no earlier than 1 Jun 2020 if certain conditions are met. As a result, governors and staff have been very busy working to get a sense of what the school might be able to offer if we open up school to further children, whilst ensuring that children and staff remain as safe as possible. We want to be open with you as to what life back in school would be like, as it will unfortunately have to be very different from what you and your children are used to.

We have received some guidance from the DfE and have sought clarification and further interpretation from the Local Authority. As a result we have had to change how we operate in order to provide as much mitigation of the risks associated with Covid-19 as we possibly can. Unfortunately there is still some underlying risk associated with the plan and this letter seeks to share what the risks are, and what we are planning on doing to mitigate them where possible.

Our plan has been designed so that it can eventually be scaled up to allow all children to return to school in the future. Furthermore, it recognises that clear guidance from the government is that fewer numbers of children should be invited back initially. The plan also took into consideration views from the recent parent questionnaire, where a small minority¹ said they would definitely want to send their children back, and the vast majority saying either only if it was safe to do so/socially distancing could be maintained, or they would definitely not be sending their children back yet.

From Monday 1st June 2020 the school will continue to be open to the following groups of children:

- keyworker children (when needed)
- vulnerable children (Mon-Wed)

From Monday 8th June 2020 we plan to open the school to the following groups of children:

- keyworker children (when needed)
- vulnerable children (Mon-Thur)
- families where **all adults** in the family are currently working (either going out to work, or working from home) (Mon-Thur)

If you feel that your family fits the above criteria please email me as soon as possible with whether you will be taking up a place or not. If you currently do not meet the criteria (because you are furloughed or out of work), you will be allocated a place when your circumstances change.

¹ 4 families (14%)

The governors will be keeping the situation under review, and hope to open up to further families in the middle of June. Furthermore, should the situation change and risks increase, the governors reserve the right to reduce attendance, or close the school, as necessary.

All those children that are not yet eligible to return will continue to receive distance learning from their teachers. However, depending upon the uptake of places in school the nature of this learning may well change - as I do not have enough staff to be in two places at once. All children will be set work to complete on Fridays. More details about the distance learning element will be given to you after half-term.

In order to ensure that staff receive their entitled planning time and breaks, that part-time staff are not required to work additional hours and that the significant additional cleaning burden can be carried out appropriately we will also need to adjust our opening hours. The school week will run from 9.00 to 2.30 daily for Monday to Thursday. We will remain open for wraparound outside of those times, and will remain open for the children of keyworkers, where there are no family members at home, on Fridays.

We recognise that this may disappoint some families, however we feel that it is best to be cautious at the current time. As risks reduce it is likely that more places will be opened up.

Please find comprehensive details of how we are planning to mitigate as much risk as possible enclosed below. If you have any questions, or would like clarification then please do not hesitate to email me and we can arrange a phone call.

The government are due to decide on 28 May whether schools should consider opening further from 1 Jun. Once we know what their plan is, we will update you further if necessary.

Nicola Threlfall

Mrs Nicola Threlfall
Headteacher
Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E Aided Primary School

Guidance and evidence used to support the plan

All decisions have been made with the following evidence or guidance:

- The DfE acknowledges that primary-aged children will not be able to socially distance from each other or staff.²
- There is very limited potential (inconclusive) evidence to suggest that children are less likely to transmit Covid-19 than adults.
- There is no evidence to suggest that adults are less likely to get Covid-19 from children than they are from other adults

²DfE publication: Coronavirus (Covid-19): Implementing Protective Measures in education and childcare settings dated 12 May 20

- There is good evidence to suggest that children are significantly less likely to die from Covid-19 than adults.
- There is good evidence to suggest that children are more likely to not have symptoms if they have Covid-19 than adults.
- There is no official data provided regarding the number of Covid-19 cases within the immediate local area, but there is evidence that people within our community have contracted the virus.

Social Distancing - Children

Children will be moved into 'social groups' of no more than 7 families (10 families for the oldest children), with no group having more than 14 children in. It has been decided to structure by families rather than age in order to reduce the number of different households each child will come into contact with. We are mindful of the number of families with siblings who would otherwise be in different groups, which would mean that essentially all the children in the school would end up having direct or indirect contact with every other child. Needless to say unfortunately this means that your child may not be with their usual teacher and may not be with all of their friends. Clearly these numbers reflect the situation if and when all children might be in. Numbers will be lower initially, when only families that meet specific criteria are in.

Our plan is for all children to be outside for half of the school day. It is commonly recognised that the likelihood of transmission is lower outside and we feel that our weekly use of beach school has set us up well to learn outside for a significant portion of the time. Please note that whilst we will be encouraging families to socially distance (2m) from each other during our work outside, we cannot guarantee that this will happen. Anecdotal evidence from other schools that have had a larger number of keyworker children in have said that this is incredibly difficult to ensure. We are able to ensure, however, that children from different social groups do not mix when outside.

For the other half of the day, children may be learning inside. Tables have been moved to be 'as far apart as possible' in line with guidance from the DfE, but we do not have enough space for them to be 2m apart (recommended social distancing guidelines). Children from Y1 upwards will sit at their desks for all of their learning. It is acknowledged that for the children in Reception and Nursery this is completely impractical, although we will be taking a more 'traditional' approach and giving them very specific tasks that are mainly static in order to reduce the likelihood of them encroaching on the space of others. They will be actively discouraged from playing on the floor or low surfaces.

The children have been split across 3 zones (Starfish class (one social group), the central area of the school (2 social groups), and the Hall(one social group)). No child will be allowed between zones. Lunches will be eaten at desks, or outside and will be brought to them by staff.

At the start and end of the day different social groups will use different entrances. Wherever possible only one adult will be allowed to bring children to school, and families will have to wait on specific spots in order to allow the children to enter safely. Parents and carers will not be allowed inside the school building unless an appointment has been made. Furthermore, staff will not be able to spend time discussing individual issues with parents

and carers as they normally do. If you would like to pass a message to staff please do so via email.

Social Distancing - Staff

As adults are more likely to become ill from Covid-19, they will, wherever possible, socially distance from each other and children. Schools have been advised by the DfE that there is no need for face masks. For those occasions where staff may need to be closer to children for any length of time they will wear masks and gloves (eg first aid, handing out lunches, supporting toileting or handwashing). This is largely to ensure that any risks to them are minimised. A number of my staff are asthmatic. Staff will teach from a distance and supervise learning from a distance. Staff will only teach in their social group, and will not be used to support other social groups. The only staff allowed to come into contact with a social group will be their nominated staff member.

Due to the requirement for teachers to have planning time, and the fact that the majority of the staff are part-time only, we will not be open to families, other than those that are keyworkers with no options of working from home, on Fridays. Furthermore, as the staff will be continuing to supervise the children during lunch and lunchbreak, the staff will have to take their unpaid 'break' time at the start/end of the school day. For this reason we will be starting at 9.00 and finishing at 2.30, for all those that do not require wraparound.

Cross-contamination

Any equipment and clothing brought from home will remain underneath the child's desk until needed. Children will not be required to bring in reading records or reading books daily (only when they need to be changed). Children will not be allowed to bring in pencil cases or notes for friends. Children will have a zip-lock bag on their tables which will have individual equipment that they need. They will be responsible for ensuring it is all put back at the end of the day. EY children will also have their own bag of equipment such as pencils, crayons, gluesticks and scissors.

Each social group will have its own resources that will not be shared to other social groups without having been cleaned and stored for at least 24 hour (if it cannot be sterilised). Individual equipment will not be shared between families during the course of a day wherever possible. Any equipment that is seen to go in mouths will be immediately withdrawn from use, cleaned and stored for at least 24 hours if it cannot be sterilised.

The school will be providing packed lunches only, so that there is less risk of cross-contamination from crockery and cutlery, and so that we can eat outside whenever possible. All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, as well as those entitled to a free school meal, will have packed lunches made in the school kitchen. Others may purchase a school packed lunch, or bring their own. Those that send in packed lunches are to ensure that their child can open all items without support. Please ensure that packed lunches are completely disposable (including containers) - children will be asked to put everything in the bin once they have finished.

Each social group will have its own toilet or toilets and handbasins to use. Where a social group has more than one toilet, the group will be further divided so that a fewer number of families are using the same equipment. Children will be encouraged to use the toilets at set times only, and they will be wiped down after each family use where possible (this cannot be

guaranteed due to the staffing levels required to do this). Clearly this does not mean that they will not be able to go in an emergency!

All children will be expected to come into school in clean (freshly washed) uniform each day.

Children will be asked to regularly wash their hands (20 seconds, back and front). Where a young child has an older sibling they will be encouraged to support them in this. It would be helpful if you could practise this at home. In addition to handwashing, there will be hand gel available when we are outside.

Cleaning

All the classrooms have had the majority of resources taken out. Government advice is for no soft furnishings/fabric toys, or toys that are difficult to clean to be in the classroom. Similarly surfaces have been cleared to enable efficient cleaning. There are surfaces for the younger children to play at, but they will not be allowed to play on the floor to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

At the end of each day all surfaces will be cleaned in accordance with guidelines from the DfE. All surfaces and equipment touched will be cleaned with general cleaning products. Toys, books and other items likely to have had significant use by younger children will be sterilised where possible, or rotated out of the classroom for at least 24/48 hours (depending on what it is made from).

Time on Friday will be used by staff to deep clean areas and resources that may be more vulnerable.

First Aid

Wherever possible children will be encouraged to support their own minor first aid, or an older sibling may be asked to support them. Where this is not possible staff will carry out first aid as normal, but will do so wearing masks. If the first aid scenario dictates it, staff will wear face shields to protect themselves.

Covid-19 symptoms

Anyone who has symptoms consistent with Covid-19 is to be tested and self-isolate, along with other household members, in accordance with government guidance. If a child comes to school with symptoms they will be refused entry.

Any child that becomes unwell during school will be immediately isolated and parents/carers will be called. Staff dealing with the child will wear PPE when supporting them. If the child is old enough they will be encouraged to wear PPE as well.

If a child in a social group becomes unwell all members of that group are to self-isolate until the outcome of a Covid-19 test has been received. If the test is negative, all members of that group can return to school. If it is positive all members of that group will need to self-isolate for 14 days (or in line with the extant government guidance).

Please note that due to staffing levels, if a staff member is unwell, or self-isolating the social group that they are responsible for will not be able to attend school until they are back.

Should there be a prolonged absence (more than 14 days), the school will look at alternative staffing options. Unfortunately I do not have enough staff to have any flex

Care for our community

The only way this will work is if all families continue to pay heed to government guidance regarding social distancing at all times. Furthermore, please be mindful of the fact that coming back to school daily may increase the risk to the local population in Embleton. As a school, the majority of the properties that surround us are owned by vulnerable people. Increasing the number of people within our immediate environment may have serious consequences if we do not take particular care.