



St. Mary's C of E School

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Dear Parents/ Carers,

I hope you are all keeping well.

Following the Government's announcement last week that schools **may** reopen on 1st June to certain year groups, I am writing on behalf of the Governing Body of St. Mary's to clarify our position on this.

It was announced that schools may open on 1st June to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils but **only** if the government thinks it is safe to do so.

It is a worrying time for us all and the school obviously has many factors to consider when planning for this possibility, but please be assured that we will only open the school to these groups of pupils if we feel the school can open safely with minimal risk to children, staff and parents. Therefore, we have begun undertaking risk assessments and making plans so that we are ready, should the Government give the go-ahead for re-opening on or after this date.

We will be creating a detailed action plan for possible re-opening, which will involve making some major changes to the school day. Some of the precautions we will be taking in the event of re-opening are:-

- Initially offering places to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 only
- Limiting class/ group sizes
- Staggering pick-up and drop-off times
- Staggering breaktimes and lunchtimes
- Increased cleaning regimes
- Limiting the sharing of resources
- Limiting external visitors to the premises
- Keeping pupils and staff with coronavirus symptoms at home.

If your child is clinically extremely vulnerable, or living with someone who is in this group, they should not come back to school and should continue home learning. If your child is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), for example if he/ she has chronic asthma or a weakened immune system, you should follow medical advice to decide if they should come back to school. Please refer to government guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings#shielded-and-clinically-vulnerable-children-and-young-people> for further details of these groups.

We are not pressuring anyone to send their children back to school. We are possibly opening the school to the three year groups as instructed by the Government but there is no compulsion for those children to attend. School attendance requirements have been relaxed at this time and no parents will be penalised for keeping their children at home. It is completely your choice as to whether your child returns to school in the event of re-opening on or after 1st June.

Unfortunately, we will not initially be permitted to admit children in Years 2, 3, 4 or 5 unless they count as 'vulnerable' or their parents are key workers. We realise that this may lead to instances where one child may be in school and their sibling is not.

Although the Department for Education has agreed that social distancing cannot be strictly observed by 5 and 6-year-olds, we will still be limiting the number of children in each class. Children will be taught in a small group by the same member/s of staff all day; they will not be allowed contact with children from other groups. Staff will be allocated to specific groups of children and will stay with these children every day, to minimise the potential for spreading infection. It is important to say that, although we will follow strict guidelines for safety and put as many measures in place as we can, it is not possible to guarantee that any child will not come into contact with another child or an adult. We will try to avoid contact as much as possible but it must be remembered, especially for the Reception and Year 1 groups, that we are dealing with young children who still need caring for and nurturing. Therefore there will always be a small element of risk which can be minimised but not totally removed by the measures we will be putting in place.

It is important to stress that if the school does re-open for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, children will not necessarily be taught by their usual class teacher. Some members of teaching staff will continue to work from home for medical reasons, meaning that your child's teacher may not be in school if and when we re-open. Events such as assemblies will not take place in the same way, and lunch will be eaten in classrooms in the designated small groups.

In line with government guidelines, it is important to note that in the unlikely event that any child or adult within a teaching group is confirmed to have COVID-19 (through testing), the whole group will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. If symptoms of coughing and temperature are displayed, the child or adult will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days.

We have yet to work out all the details of a plan for re-opening, and much of the planning will depend on how many parents choose to send their children back to school. Early responses from parents indicate that at least half of each year group may remain at home in the event of the school re-opening. Another point to consider is that if your child's class teacher is asked to teach in school during the phased re-opening period, she will still set weekly tasks for home learning but will not be able to provide daily feedback and communication to the same extent that she has been during the last few weeks, as she will be instrumental in keeping things running smoothly at school.

Unfortunately, the pre-school will continue to be closed, as we are unable to provide adequate staffing and facilities to run it safely at this stage. We also regret that we will not be able to run breakfast club or after school club, and that the coach which took children to and from school before Easter will no longer be available.

Until at least 1st June, the school remains open **only** for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. We know some employers will be encouraging you to return to work, but we are currently not in a position to extend places to other children until we receive further government guidance.

If you have a child in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6, could you please let us know by **Friday 22nd May** whether or not you intend to send your child back to school on or after 1st June; please do this by completing the attached form and emailing it to admin@st-marys-pri.hereford.sch.uk. This will enable us to put thorough plans in place for looking after any children who do attend as safely as possible. If your child is in one of these year groups and we have not heard from you by Midday on Friday 22nd, you will receive a call from the school office to ensure that we know your intentions. This then gives us just over a week to put everything in place if the school is to re-open on 1st June.

If you would like to read the Department for Education's guidance which we will be following in order to formulate our plans for possible re-opening, please go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools#annex-a-behaviour-principles>

I would like to reassure you again that we will not be putting any pressure on you to send your children back to school; you know what is best for your child's health and well-being.

Once we have more information, we will be in touch again. In the meantime, look after yourselves and do not hesitate to give us a call if you need anything at all.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Milne