



Oughton Primary & Nursery School

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22nd May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following on from my last letter, I am writing to you to update you. We all miss our children at Oughton; Teachers and Teaching Assistants miss doing what they love – teaching and I certainly miss the chatter and laughter of children across the school. Safety must be our primary concern and I would ask that you read this letter carefully as it contains a lot of information. I have tried to give you as much information as I possibly can at this uncertain time.

As I have previously explained, the Government announced a plan for a phased reopening of Primary schools starting with Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children on 1st June **at the earliest**, as long as conditions across the country having been met. We will know more on 28th May when the Government announce their final decision.

We have been told to focus on these year groups only at the moment and not to plan for the reopening of the school for Years 2, 3, 4, and 5 at this time. Please be aware, if and when, we are told to increase and reopen for the other year groups, we would not be able to offer full-time provision across the school due to a lack of staff and rooms, **if** we needed to stay within the guidance of smaller groups. I sincerely hope that we begin to move towards normality across the country, as it would be lovely to see the children in our other year groups before the end of July.

Thank you so much to everyone who filled in their ParentMail form; this enabled me to make some concrete plans, which are now being discussed with staff. I am well aware that some of you made a decision based on little information and some of you are still considering your decision, which is not a problem at all. In my plans, I have included all children who may possibly be attending, following your comments; I completely understand your concerns and reservations.

I have formed plans, based on Government Guidance, HCC guidance plus our own Risk Assessment regarding our staff numbers (some of whom are shielding), our numbers of children (some of whom will not be returning due to shielding or Parental wishes), our buildings and practice.

If you did **not** fill in the form detailing of your child's possible return or replied no and now have changed your mind, or even change your mind in later weeks; you will need to contact the school office via admin@oughton.herts.sch.uk. **You must not just walk onto the school site week beginning 1st June with your child.** All other children will have been put into groups based on numbers and staffing and will be placed in areas across the school. You may need to wait a few days or even a week, as an increase in numbers of children impacts on groups and staffing.

We ask that Parents do not approach the front office, as we need to limit site use. Please ring 01642 450716 or email admin@oughton.herts.sch.uk if you have a query. Please be aware, due to staffing, at times there may not be a member of staff always on the front desk. Please pay for school meals and trips (I am aware of the Year 5 PGL trip booked next academic year and many Parents have phoned about this) on ParentMail. If you have the app, click on the top left hand side, scroll down to Payments and click on shop at the bottom.

Please do **not** compare our plans once they are finalised, with those of local Primary schools as each school has their own buildings with constraints, their own staff force with individual needs and various numbers of children in their schools. Each school is basing their plan on their own individual circumstances. I attended a virtual meeting with the other Headteachers of Hitchin and the surrounding areas recently and it became very clear that no two schools are the same due to differences in size, location, premises and staff availability. In Oughton, we have a high level of part-time staff. We also have a number of staff (Teachers, TAs and support staff) who are not able to either come into work or work directly with children due to either their own health needs or the health of family members. We also have more children in some year groups; we have two classes in Year 6 to consider.

Similarly, every Parent will have their own views and opinions on this difficult situation and you may not agree with some of the measures we have put in place. However, all I can do is reassure you that I have made decisions

considering the needs and safety of ALL children, families and staff with the many restrictions I have. Unfortunately, we are not able to be as flexible as we normally are. I know that many of you expressed in your comments how you understand and I really appreciate your positive feedback.

I have looked into implementing the many guidelines for staff, children and Parents. Our plans base children into groups or 'bubbles' as some staff are describing them as, of less than 15 with a member of staff. In some rooms, we have limited these numbers to less than 12 due to the layout and size of the rooms. Some of these groups are **not** in their normal classrooms and many will **not** be taught by their normal class teacher as this is not possible. I have needed to consider staff availability, four cohorts of children with different needs, rooms and the staff site as a whole. I have however, ensured that the Early Years (Nursery and Reception) groups are in or close to the Early Years setting. I have ensured that Year 1, which has been split in half, is located in 2 classes next to each other, so the children see their classmates. I have also ensured that the Year 6 groups are close to each other.

I will be sending details of the plans to those Parents who have informed me of their child returning or possibly returning next week after the Government announcement on 28th May. I am also waiting for medical advice regarding some staff at the present time and will finalise aspects at the end of half term. I know that this is late notice to you all however, I am sure you fully understand my constraints.

If you returned the form detailing that you would not be sending your child into school and your child is in Year 6, Year 1, Reception or Nursery, as I have stated previously, you will **not** receive home learning, as Teachers will now be teaching full-time. We will be highlighting some websites, which you may find useful. If your child is in Year 2, 3, 4 and 5, home learning will be sent home and on the website as normal on a Sunday. However, this work may now be set by a different Teacher as some of the other Teachers are required to teach some of the priority groups.

If you are a Key Worker and your child is in Year 2, 3, 4 and 5 and you have filled in the form requesting a place from week beginning 1st June, home learning will continue to be sent home and this work will also be followed within school, supplemented with some whole group project work. You will receive details of the plans in place to support your children at the end of half term. Key Worker children will have a full-time place.

Start and end timing for groups will be staggered to allow for safe access and exit for children and Parents. You will be told the timings for your child's group. We are also in the process of changing the access and exit routes into and out of school. This may be inconvenient for you however, we are following Government guidance on this.

I have detailed some questions below which I have been asked on the forms and my answers.

Q. We have a family member who is critically vulnerable and we have received a letter. Can my child attend school?
A. No. If a child lives with someone who is shielding, they should not be attending school unless stringent social distancing can be adhered to. This is very challenging in a school. Please see the guidance at gov.uk. Please contact us if you have any concerns of this nature.

Q Will my child be 100% safe from catching Coronavirus in school?

A No I cannot guarantee this at all. We cannot be 100% safe and I have been clear and honest to Parents - we are working with children, who, as you are all aware, are unable to keep a 2m distance. However, we will remind them and do our best to keep a distance. The Government has stated in their guidance Coronavirus (Covid-19): Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings 11 May 2020 that **"early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff."**

We will encourage safe distances, however, the younger children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and even Year 6 cannot be expected to fully understand these restraints. Young children will get close to adults; this is part of human nature and they will also stand close to the other children in their groups as they learn and play during the school day. They are still developing their social skills and interaction is key at this phase in education. We will not be putting children in small squares. We will not be enforcing Early Years children to sit at desks apart from others. This is not how the Early Years setting works at Oughton. We will space Year 1 and Year 6 desks out for them to work at when they are in their classrooms, to keep distancing measures. We will also be taking our learning outside.

The Teachers are working hard to adapt their teaching to changing times. However, we **will** be reminding them of the safe distances and we will teach them about hygiene, as I am sure you are too. We **will** be frequency hand washing, regularly cleaning the setting and will minimise contact and mixing of groups. I would remind you that **you** are making the decision to send your child into school, knowing the risks and we cannot keep children 100% safe from catching Coronavirus. However, we will try to minimise risk as much as is possible given our circumstances for children, Parents and staff.

Q Is returning to school compulsory?

A The DfE Planning Guide for Primary Schools 14 May 2020 has stated: Parents and carers of eligible year groups, and critical workers/parents and carers of vulnerable children are strongly encouraged to bring their children in, but they will not face fines or other sanctions if they don't.

Q Will it be full 5 days a week? Will we have a day off?

A Attendance expectations will be the same as usual – for 5 days per week but we have adjusted our start and end times to allow a safe access and exit. Work will continue throughout the week and missing days impacts greatly on their learning.

Q Can my child attend part-time in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6?

A No the children are expected to be in school for a full day. We do not have the staff in school to cater for different children leaving at different times, other than any staggering start and finishing times.

Q Will my child need to wear their school uniform?

A Yes – **all children, including Key Worker children will be required to wear their school uniform as normal.** The Key Worker children at present have not been wearing their school uniform but this is due to the fact that this small group of children have been the only ones in school, whilst the rest of the school are not. Week beginning 1st June, **everyone is expected to wear a uniform.** The wearing of our uniform sets the standard and shows that we are at Oughton Primary and Nursery School and are ready to learn. It also unites the children together. I am aware that some of the children may have grown out of their school shoes and these are difficult to replace. At this time, sensible shoes/smart trainers are acceptable. Normal school rules apply – no jewellery, no nail varnish, hair tied back applies. If you have a problem and your child has grown out of their sweatshirts, we do have some preloved sweatshirts or new ones in stock. Please email admin@oughton,herts.sch.uk.

Q I am a Key Worker, can my child attend part-time? (My child is in Year 2, 3, 4 and 5)

A Yes but only as full days. We do not have the staff to collect and bring children to the front office. You will be asked to book your child in **on the days you work away from home.** If you are at home, or working from home, your child should be with you.

Q Will you send me individual information regarding my child, their teacher and the names of the other children in their group?

A We will be sending you some more information regarding times of arrival, finishing times and location of your child's classroom. We will not be sending out information regarding groups of other children, this is not appropriate. I am still waiting for further medical advice regarding some members of staff and I may not be to detail to you the exact name of the staff who will be leading the group as this may change due to the health of staff. However, all of the staff work at Oughton and I have primarily placed staff in age phases, which they are experienced in teaching. We are not using Teachers or support staff unknown to us. Due to the serious nature of this virus and the day-to-day changes at any time, children, staff and families need to be flexible.

Q. What do the classes look like?

A. Different to when the children left, yet with some aspects the same. They have been deep cleaned. In Year 6 and 1, many tables have been removed or put to the side and the tables have been spaced out individually. Furniture is now limited. The displays are as they were, with some parts taken down to allow access. However, the classes will still look familiar – colourful, organised and still engaging.

In Early Years, there are still workstations with space in between so the children can produce creative pieces of work. However, children in Early Years do not sit at desks; this is not how our Early Years setting works. Some furniture and toys have been removed. We have put some equipment away from outside, as a lot of it cannot be cleaned each day. Unfortunately, the classes do not look quite as lovely as they did before, but they are still engaging and child friendly, with work still displayed on walls. The rest of the school looks very similar. Our hall has the lovely work produced by our Key Worker children on display. We are still working on the classrooms, no room is yet ready as this takes a lot of time and many staff are coming in over half term in order to prepare.

Q Will the children have the same Teacher or TA for each session?

A In most cases, yes. However, for some groups, there may be another member of staff leading at some point over the week as Teachers need planning time. Some of our Teachers are part-time so there may be a job share within the group. Once the group has met their staff across the week, the plan is for these staff to remain with them over following weeks – until either the rest of the school needs to return or health conditions regarding staff arise. Staffing may and will change if needed. However, all decisions are made to reduce the impact to the children where possible.

Q Will the children go out at break and lunchtime?

A Yes. They will go out and will play in their allocated space with their groups. Groups will not be able to mix, however they will see other children in other groups ie out on the field or in an allocated area in the playground. We will be encouraging waving, messages etc as it is important to recognise that some of their classmates may be in a different group and friendships are vital to everyone.

Q What happens if my child becomes ill?

A You will be immediately contacted and asked to collect your child straight away. If Coronavirus is suspected, your child will be isolated from the rest of their group immediately and you will be contacted. If this is the case, the child

presenting with symptoms will need to self-isolate for 7 days and their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children in their group who are attending school will have access to a test if they display symptoms of Coronavirus. If someone tests positive, the rest of their group will be sent home advised to self-isolate for 14 days. Please see DfE Coronavirus (Covid-19): Implementing protective measures in education and childcare setting 11 May 2020.

Q What transition activities would take place?

A We do not know exactly. The 'move up' day in July is unlikely to take place so we will be finding different ways for children to feel like they have the information they need before starting their new school. We hope that the Secondary schools will support us with this and pass information to us to discuss with the children. We will be talking about moving on, changes and differences in schools as part of our work in Year 6.

Q Is there a time frame for Year 2, 3, 4 and 5 returning?

A No - at the moment. We have almost used all of our classrooms and the staff who are able to be in school working with children are allocated to a group. If we were to bring the other year groups in, we would not be able to offer full-time to everyone. Our provision planned at the moment would need to be changed.

Q I am a Key Worker and I have one child in a year group where they are all in school and another child in a different year group. Can they be together?

A Not in school. A child cannot move groups. They cannot be in their Year Group one day and then with their sibling group on a different day. This is to ensure limit the spreading of the virus for staff and children. The work set will also be different. Year 6, 1, Nursery and Reception will be taught work at their level by a Teacher with other children in their cohort. The Key Worker groups are for children in Year 2, 3, 4 and 5 and will be focusing on the work for their year groups only. Year 6, 1, Reception and Nursery staff will not be setting work for home learning. We are providing full-time for these cohorts to make this simpler for Parents and better for the children's education.

Q Will the public bus be restricted in the number of riders?

A I am sorry but I do not have any information regarding public transport. Please contact your local bus company.

Q Will my child need to wear a mask?

A No. We are following the Government advice regarding PPE equipment. Wearing a face mask or face covering in schools is not recommended and hinders communication. A member of staff may wear a mask if they are dealing with someone who is showing symptoms on Coronavirus. If this were the case, the person showing symptoms would be isolated immediately.

Q Can my child bring their own pencil cases – pen, pencils into school? Water bottles?

A Yes please. However, once these are brought into school, they must not be removed and must be left on their table. If a child does not have pens, pencils etc, they will be given some to use and these will be left on their table. Equipment must not go from home to school and back. **Only** packed lunches and water bottles will be brought in each day and we will limit the touching of these. Remember, water bottle filled with water, no juice please.

I am aware that many of you gave a yes indication to your child returning to school and wanted more information. However, at this point, I am unable to expand on more details as we are still working on many aspects and are getting rooms ready. I completely understand that this is a very difficult decision for you as Parents to make and I thank you for your honesty.

Our highest priority is to be as safe as we can, for everyone - the children, Parents and staff.

Please take care of yourselves and your families.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Clayton
Headteacher