



Thursday 14th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Phased Re-opening of Schools – June 2020

It's now been three days since the Prime Minister's announcement, which included plans for the phased reopening of schools. Since Sunday, the leadership team has been working hard to see what this might look like and how we can manage this safely at Whitehill. We all miss our pupils; teachers miss doing what they love – teaching; and so we welcome the beginnings of a safe return to normality. Safety must be our primary concern and one of the ways of achieving this is limiting the numbers of pupils present. The government's plan is that Year 6 return first, no earlier than June 1st, if certain conditions are met.

There will be no change for the other year groups for the time being. Once Year 6 have returned to school, Years 3, 4 and 5 will continue to have learning facilitated by class teachers using Google Classroom in the current format. Please be mindful that once the first stage of reopening has begun (no earlier than June 1st) **all class teachers** will be called upon to provide some additional in-school support on a rota basis, while continuing to facilitate the learning for their class.

Outlined below is specific information for parents of children in Year 6, related to their return to school. I thought this would be of interest to all parents to see how we are managing stage one of the reopening; it is likely that when we reopen for other year groups (no earlier than July) somehow, similar protocols will need to be observed.

For reasons of social distancing, pupils will be taught in half-class groups. We will refer to these groups as 'pods'. Each pod will be assigned particular adults, who will need to remain constant to minimise possible transmission of the virus. This will mean that half of the pupils **will not be with their class teacher**. Within each pod, we will reduce contact between staff and pupils and, as far as possible, maintain social distancing measures. The government has recognised the challenge of maintaining social distance in a school setting:

'We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff.' (Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020 Gov.Uk)

Some of the general practices we will be reinforcing are:

- Frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- Regular cleaning of settings
- And minimising contact and mixing



As for the more specific detail of the return, there are a number of key points:

Arrival / Departure

Arrival and departure each day will be staggered, with pupils asked to arrive any time between 8.30am and 9.15am. Entry will be through the two pedestrian entrances on Whitehill Road and Sunnyside Road.

Anyone entering and leaving will need to exercise patience and consideration to maintain appropriate distance.

We would strongly encourage you to let your child enter the school site on their own, to minimise numbers moving through these narrow spaces.

We will obviously monitor how this works in case adjustments need to be made to improve the system.

Clearly, there will be a very human urge to congregate and catch up with staff and other parents when on the school grounds. **We must ask you not to do this.**

The end of the school day will also be staggered. Half of the pupils will be dismissed at 3.00pm with the remaining pupils leaving at 3.10pm. We will let you know which pupils will be leaving at which times and these will then be fixed for the duration of this first phase.

Again, if you plan to collect your child at the end of the day, please exercise appropriate social distancing on the playground. If your child walks home on their own, would you please support us by reinforcing the need for them to walk home alone. Pupils must not congregate in groups and walk home in close contact with their peers. Equally, we will be asking you to clear the school site as soon as possible at the end of each day.

Messages

Please send any messages for class teachers or our admin team via email (admin@whitehill.herts.sch.uk) or if specifically related to Covid-19, consult@whitehill.herts.sch.uk) or phone wherever possible.

Attendance and Punctuality

For safeguarding reasons, please continue to inform us of any absence (just as you did before lockdown). The government has said, *'Children and young people in eligible year groups are strongly encouraged to attend (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household)'*

Food and drink

The school kitchen will remain open for those pupils wishing to have a hot dinner. We are currently in discussion with Mrs Stokes and Herts Catering as to how this will be managed.

Please ensure that you send your child with a **named** water bottle, that they will need to bring back home to be cleaned each day.

Children might well have got used to eating at different times of the day and we would remind you that snacks are a welcome addition to break time.



Personal Equipment

In order to minimise cross-contamination, it would be helpful if you could send your child in with their own stationery: pens, pencils, ruler etc. It is expected that pupils will wear school uniform.

A Typical Day

It isn't appropriate to go into the minutiae of what a typical day will look like for the Year 6s upon their return. That being said, there will be staggered breaktimes and lunchtimes; different pods will have access to different toilets and they will eat in different areas of the school.

The curriculum will be revised and our priority will be the pupils' well-being and work on transition as we work towards the end of their time at Whitehill and they prepare for the next phase of their education at secondary school.

PPE

The government states in its guidance, *'Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other educational settings is not recommended... Schools and other education settings should therefore not require staff, children or learners to wear face coverings.'* (Coronavirus: implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings – 11th May 2020)

With this letter, I have also attached a guidance document specifically written for parents:
Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers

You will appreciate that these adjustments will mean a considerable change at school for the children and adults on their return. This may cause some anxiety for the children and we hope that you will support them to understand that this is to keep everyone safe.

We hope to put out a very short survey to Y6 parents gauging their thoughts about the return in the next couple of days. Please look out for this and thank you in advance for taking the time to complete it.

Key Worker Pupils

As well as the provision for our Year 6 pupils, we will continue to support pupils (not in Year 6) of our key worker families. They will be taught within their own pod. These pupils will enter the school via Mr Lord's classroom anytime from 8.30am. It would be helpful if they could be collected before 3.00pm but of course we understand if this is not possible. At the end of the day, parents collecting key worker pupils should continue to use the staff carpark (if appropriate) and wait by the same external door that the pupils entered by.

Thank you for taking the time to read this communication. We have tried to make it as clear and as reassuring as we could. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via the consult@whitehill.herts.sch.uk email address.

Best wishes,



Steve Mills
Headteacher

