



23rd February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Full Opening of Schools from 8th March

Following on from the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday, I can confirm that, in line with the latest set of guidance from the Department of Education, **school will be open to all pupils again from Monday 8th March.**

The guidance sets out quite clearly the expectations placed on schools, which are very similar to those placed on schools for the Autumn Term, particularly as far as pupils are concerned. We will therefore be operating along similar lines at Whitehill as we did from September.

The Start of the Day

For those of you who had previously registered for our early morning provision, I can confirm that this will start up again. Pupils can arrive from 8.00am and will need to have been fed.

For everyone else, pupils can arrive at school from 8.35am; please do not arrive any earlier. Pupils will then go straight into their classrooms through the specified doors. Senior staff will be on hand each morning to welcome you and make sure you all know where you are going. We will continue with the extended start time which worked so well in the Autumn Term which means pupils can arrive up to 8.55am. This will help with social distancing on the playgrounds and reduce congestion around the gates. I would ask that when you have dropped your child off, you leave the playground as soon as possible.

End of the School Day

We will continue with the two collection times which worked well to minimise congestion on the playgrounds. Lower School pupils will finish at 3.10pm and Upper School pupils at 3.20pm. Again, we ask that parents and pupils leave the site as quickly as possible at the end of the day. The play equipment continues to be out of action after school until further notice.

School Books

Over the course of lockdown, pupils have taken delivery of their school exercise books and some will have reading books. Many will also have maths resources and other bits and pieces belonging to the school. All of these need to come back in on Monday 8th March please, so that they can be sorted and be ready to use again.

Cookie Club

The government have confirmed that wrap-around provision can continue from 8th March and therefore I am currently liaising with Cookie Club and can confirm they will be operational from that first day. I will let you know should this not be the case. Please liaise directly with them in the usual way, if you need any further information.

Lunchtimes

From the first day back, you will need to have selected the school meal option via School Grid if you would like your child to have a school lunch. We hope the menus will be updated shortly. I would suggest waiting a few days and as long as they are selected by Sunday 7th March, all will be fine.



For those of you who have had pupils attending as critical workers, all future meals will now need to be paid for (if not on free school meals) and this is done in the usual way via School Gateway.

School Uniform

We will be implementing our usual school uniform policy. Specifically, pupils will be required to change from outdoor to indoor shoes upon arrival to school and when going out to break and lunch. We hope we will be able to make use of the school field and therefore this will be important if we are to keep the classrooms free from mud. Pupils will also bring their PE kits to change into in school unless otherwise directed by their class teachers. The DfE guidance clearly states pupils **do not** need to wear clean / washed uniform each day. I do recognise that with Year 6s, there may be some pupils who have grown out of some items of clothing. I will of course take a pragmatic approach to all uniform issues.

Lateral Flow Tests

Those of you with children of secondary school age will no doubt be aware that they will be tested twice weekly upon their return. Pupils of primary school age **will not** be tested in the same way and should only be asked to take Covid Test if they develop symptoms. Staff will have the ability to test themselves twice-weekly in order to minimise the risk of asymptomatic spread of the virus.

Blended Learning

Should a child not be able to attend school for any period of time due to the fact they have been asked to self-isolate, we still want them to be able to access the learning taking place in their classroom.

When we become aware that a child is off for this reason, their class teacher will have an open Google Meet link in their Google Classroom. This will allow them to join in the lesson via a digital device at home. The class teachers will also upload any related resources to the Classroom.

This has proved to be very successful to date and even enables the isolating pupil to chat with his or her peers during the independent or small group tasks.

Clearly, the teachers will need to be aware that a child is off for shielding reasons and is well themselves. Once you have informed the school office this is the case, Mrs Lanni or Mrs Cook will inform the teacher. Time will then be needed to initiate the online engagement and therefore, depending upon when we hear, it might not be until the start of the second day of absence.

If a child is off through ill health they would obviously **not** be expected to participate and the live lesson link would not be available.

If you have any questions or difficulties accessing the lesson, please contact the school office or email me at consult@whitehill.herts.sch.uk.

Consultation Evenings

I will shortly be sending home the information about booking your consultation evening appointments with your child's class teacher which will take place over three evenings; Thursday 18th, Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th March. Once again, all of these meetings will take place virtually.

We will be using the same platform to host these meetings as the one you will use to book them. I will be sending home all the necessary guides. The meetings can be accessed through any appropriate device including phones, tablets and computers thus allowing the flexibility to take place wherever you might be.

The booking system will go live on Monday 1st March at 9.00am. There are a limited number of appointments each evening and they are selected on a first come, first served basis.

As before, Mrs McConnell Smith will not be able to join you with your class teacher but will be hosting a separate set of appointments on Wednesday 14th April. Should you decide, having spoken to your child's class teacher that



you want to discuss something with Mrs McConnell Smith, a link to book an appointment with her will go live on Thursday 25th March.

Again, should you have any difficulty accessing the site, please do not hesitate in contacting the school office.

Creative Arts Week

We recognise that there has been significant disruption to learning over the year to date and through chatting with pupils during 'Biscuits with the Boss', the one thing pupils are looking forward to most is the ability to see and chat with their friends again.

Our plan for the first week back, as we support the pupils with the return to school, is to run a creative arts week which will be very practical based and encourage lots of talk, collaboration and fresh air. We feel that if we support the pupils' well-being during these initial weeks, we will be able to drive forward with the curriculum across the summer term.

School Chromebooks

If you borrowed a school Chromebook throughout this latest lockdown, please would you return these on Monday 8th March. Pupils should take them to Mrs Lanni in the school office when they arrive at school. Please don't forget the charging cable and case!

Parents in School

Certainly, in the first three weeks, we would like to minimise the number of adults who come into school or visit the school office. Please try and use email or telephone should you need to ask a question. Should you need to visit the office, however, I would ask that you do wear a mask when in the school building.

Covid Blog

I will continue to post significant updates on our Covid blog which can be accessed through the homepage of the school website as well as through direct communication such as this.

I am sorry this communication is a little on the wordy side. The executive summary effectively says, 'See you on the 8th'.

Thank you again for all your support through the last seven weeks. As long as we all abide by the guidance, I truly believe the end is in sight. Who knows, there might even be the possibility of key school events planned for the summer term taking place but more about those in due course. Fingers crossed!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the school in the usual ways.

Best wishes,



Steve Mills
Headteacher

