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Re: Phased opening of school from June

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you with some information regarding the phased reopening of Northfield Manor Academy. As you know, the government's plan is to open state schools to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from June 1st.

You will be aware of the debate around whether it is too soon to open. The government believes it to be safe if 'protective measures' are introduced. At this time of writing, teaching and other unions do not agree. The British Medical Association (BMA) believe that the number of infections is still too high and more must be known about children's ability to spread the virus before schools open. <https://twitter.com/TheBMA/status/1261281483106508801>. The Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health have clarified their position and state the evidence remains unclear on transmission of the virus by children. It appears that it could be lower, but, if so, no-one knows by how much.

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/news-events/news/incorrect-media-reporting-about-children-transmission-covid-19>

Some Academy Chains have declared that they will open and some local authorities have declared that they will not. It is within this context that I have to decide how to safely open our school and you have to decide whether to send your children.

This is a difficult decision for any parent or carer. Knowing more about how the provision would work at Northfield Manor as more children and adults are brought into the building may help. I have used the latest government guidance and applied it to the context of our school.

What 'protective measures' will be in place?

- Temporary teaching groups - small groups where the group and teacher remain in a 'protective bubble' not mixing with other groups or individuals (members of the group remain constant)
- A 2 metre social distancing rule where possible
- Desks will be spaced 2 metres apart
- Resources will not be shared or, if they are, they will be cleaned between each use
- Staggered breaks and lunchtimes
- Staggered start and home-times
- Minimised movement around the building and one-way systems
- Frequent handwashing
- Rigorous cleaning regime for the building and resources
- Rigorous staff training in procedures and protocols

How will class and group sizes be determined?

This is crucial factor in reducing social contact. The British government's guidance states: '*For primary schools, classes should normally be split in half, with no more than 15 pupils per small group and one teacher (and, if needed a teaching assistant)*'. The Danish Health Authority who the government have held up as a model and says we are mirroring, have also split also classes in half, however, their class sizes are on average 19-20. Their regulations limit class sizes to 10 pupils and desks at least 2 meters apart. Within classes, children are then subdivided (when they play more freely) into smaller consistent groups of 3-5 from the same classroom. I intend to follow this model. This means that at Northfield Manor we are able to accommodate approximately 8-10 children in each Northfield Manor classroom. As you can see, due to the nature of 'protective bubbles' and limited group sizes, not all children will be able to be taught by their own teacher. We will endeavor to provide a teacher who is well-known to your child, but I cannot guarantee it.

What will happen if there is a suspected case of coronavirus in school?

'Protective bubbles' are important in reducing spread. Should someone become infected, we know who that person has had contact with and who may be at risk. However, there is no 'test, track and trace' in place yet and we are still awaiting government plans on this issue. As before lockdown, should a child show symptom of the virus, they will be isolated until they can go home. There will be the same isolation periods for suspected cases, however the individual should now be able to get access to a test.

What education will my child get? Will my child be taught the curriculum?

All lessons will be planned by teachers and your child will be taught the curriculum appropriate to their age and stage. There will be a strong focus on social interaction and core subject skills.

What about pupils still learning remotely?

We will do our best to continue to provide home learning where possible, however, as we move forwards this may need to be adapted due to the growing demands of teacher time within school. The next set of work packs are currently being created by teachers and will be copied and available for collection in half-term. We will send you a collection timetable shortly. To cover all eventualities, we will complete packs for all children in the identified groups, as we do not yet know who will be in school. These packs will cover the first 2 weeks after half-term.

If I have children in different year groups, will I be able to bring them to school at the same time?

Due to the complex logistics of this situation, we cannot promise this.

What if my child is shielding or vulnerable?

If your child is shielding because they are *clinically extremely vulnerable*, they must continue to shield. If your child is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) you must consult your doctor before making a decision.

Do I have to send my child to school?

No. The government says, *'Parents and carers of eligible year groups, and critical workers/parents and carers of vulnerable children, are strongly encouraged to bring in their children, but they will not face fines and sanctions if they don't.'*

What other factors might I want to consider?

You may want to consider your family situation. Your family will be physically connected to a wider community. While we will aim to reduce the risk of transmission as much as possible, there will still be some risk. You will want to consider the vulnerabilities of your own family group.

Will places continue for key workers and vulnerable children?

Yes. Their places remain will available for them.

Will wrap-around care (breakfast and after-school clubs) be available?

Unfortunately, we cannot provide wrap-around care at this time, but this will remain open to review.

Will children be provided with a lunch?

All children who want a school lunch will be able to have one. This may be limited to cold pre-prepared food as our small kitchen may not allow for social distancing when preparing hot meals.

What about the children in other year groups?

The government states that it is *'Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, for one month if feasible, though this will be kept under review.'*

Will the school be open over half-term?

Yes, the school will be open for key workers over half-term. Teachers will be on their half-term break so they will not be available through Class Dojo. Senior staff and some office staff are available through enquiry@ email. Children will not be expected to complete school work during this week.

What do I do next?

As you can see, a return to school is not a return to the school as we knew it before lockdown. The science around the safety of early opening is contested. I have tried, within the evidence that we have available, to make school opening as safe as possible. You will need to decide if you are satisfied with the level of risk for your child and family. If you are the parent or carer of a child in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6, I will be asking you tomorrow (Tuesday 19th May) if you want a place for your child. When I have that information, I will plan the next steps and be able

to give you more details about your child's timetable and teacher. Please remember that this depends upon our staffing capacity, negotiation with unions and government tests.

Provisional Date for Opening

Our provisional date for opening will be **Wednesday 3rd June**. Time is short and agreements have still not been reached between the government and unions. Most teachers will not be physically in school this week and will then be on their half-term break after that. We are now engaged in the process of writing and agreeing risk assessments. As always, the safety of the children, staff and our community have to be paramount. Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd will be used to train and prepare staff on site.

Yours faithfully
Mrs Sandra Pennington

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