



St Lawrence's RC Primary School

Headlam Street

Byker

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Wednesday 27 May

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Update: Reopening of school

Thank you for your patience and support during this very challenging and anxious time.

Governors and staff have waited for Government and Local Authority guidance on the reopening of schools (i.e. beyond our current responsibilities to be open in support of children of essential workers and caring for vulnerable children)

The government has now published its final guidance. To recap on the Government recommendation: *'If schools think their local situation and risk plans enable safe reopening, those schools will reopen at the earliest from 1 June, in a gradual and phased return of children.'* Our region however, remains one of national and local concern, specifically because of the rate of infection and serious implications upon health. Hence, under local authority advice and guidance, schools in Newcastle and Gateshead are *taking a cautious and measured approach* to plans for welcoming children back after half-term and will generally not reopen until at least June 8.

In response, as a leadership team, we have been working extremely hard to ensure that we fully understand the guidance, recommendations and, importantly, in undertaking the associated Risk Planning implications for our school. In terms of key decision factors our school has its own unique physical layout challenges and experience clearly demonstrates that younger children do not understand the concept of social distancing. However, we now have confidence in our planning and in assuring the health and safety of our staff, children and community.

Phased Return from 15th June

In line with local authority advice and our risk management and safety planning we propose to reopen the school for **Year 6 only, on 15 June**. We will then assess how many children actually return to school, review the implications of those numbers and validate our planning and resources, before the phased return of Year 1 children.

Risk Management & Planning

The **Risk Management Plan** is available on our school website. It is entitled 'Draft Risk Assessment for Return to School': <https://www.stlawrencesprimary.org.uk/school-news/2020/05/draft-risk-assessment-for-return-to-school/>

This plan should help to give you confidence and encouragement to return your child to school by showing you where our efforts will be directed over the next few weeks. We welcome any comments or concerns you may have. To take part in this consultation please email such concerns or questions by Monday 1 June at 10.30am to office@stlawrencesprimary.org.uk

We will then issue a further detailed return to school plan outlining the 'how' and the phases of 'when' we can safely welcome back all our children. Please note, initial returns will be **Year 6 only**, and then other year groups will return in a phased reopening of the school. I must also stress, **if it is safe and reasonable to do so**.

The **Return to School Plan** will be distributed to all parents by, **Friday 5th June** at the latest.

Governors and staff need to make you and the children aware, that out of the necessity of safety planning and precautions, our usual school environment will be **significantly different**. We want you and the children to be prepared for the following changes.

The school environment already appears stark and sterile. We have had to clear our walls of pictures, rooms of soft furnishings and close the library. We must also plan to **severely restrict the movement** of parents, staff and children, both outside and inside the school. We are still considering how to accommodate the requirements of social distancing within the existing physical constraints of the school. In addition, we need to plan for increased cleaning, restricted use of the toilets and a change to meal arrangements. Additional precautions we must take include:

- Limiting physical class sizes – the government recommends class sizes 'no greater than 15.' At St. Lawrence's our classrooms are particularly small. To have any chance of maintaining social distancing, the class sizes at St. Lawrence's will be limited to groups of 9.
- Learning pods – These groups of 9 will form a 'learning pod' from now until the end of the school term. This means that children will only mix within this pod and not with the wider class.
- Limited Learning - The guidance means that the children will have to remain at their desks during each lesson to avoid contact with each other. Lessons will therefore be much less interactive than we would like and resources will be limited.
- No access to school grounds - At this stage in planning it is likely that parents will not be able to enter the school premises at all. They will drop the children off and collect them from outside the school premises, taking care to socially distance themselves.
- Staggering break times

Governors want to reassure you, that at this time of uncertainty, we won't be pressuring parents to send their children to school – you know what's best for your child's health and wellbeing. We appreciate what a big decision this is. Should you wish to continue with home learning provided by the school, then you will do so with our blessing. We'll provide you with more details on the arrangements for reopening in the coming weeks, so you can make an appropriate, informed decision.

Considerations

It is imperative that any pupils and staff with underlying health issues or coronavirus symptoms will need to stay 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 yet and should continue home learning.

If your child is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), you should follow medical advice to decide if they should come back to school. Please refer to [government guidance](#).

Please be reminded that in the meantime, the school is still open **only** for vulnerable pupils and the children of essential and critical workers. Until we can confirm it is safe to do so, we're unable to provide places for any other children.

We'll continue to keep you updated about planning phases and when the school will be able to reopen for other year groups.

For all pupils at home, we'll continue to support you and your child with home learning, and meal support for those eligible.

We hope that you will understand and support our safety first, cautious approach to this complicated situation. If you have any questions, please contact office@stlawrencesprimary.org.uk

Yours faithfully

Anthony Cunningham

Paul Brown

Mr A Cunningham

Mr P Brown

Chair of Governors

Head Teacher