

Seghill First School

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Dear Parents and Carers

There has been lots of coverage in the news and on social media about the phased reopening of schools. In the first instance, children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 have been chosen to return to primary schools after half term.

Although it was expected that the government would announce that some children should return to school, it was a shock to most of us that children in the three youngest year groups were chosen first. The government plans are for all other primary aged children to return to school before the summer for a month if feasible.

The government has produced a number of guidance documents to support school leaders to plan for a safe, phased return to school for some children. We are using this guidance to draw up plans and map out what every part of the school day will look like in order to keep children and staff safe. As yet the plans for the timings of the day and how drop offs and picks up will look have not been finalised and I am working on this with staff and governors.

Our plans have to include how we will manage a safe return to school for the youngest pupils first and all pupils in the future. What we offer may not be the same as another school. Each school and school building is unique; we must look at the school building and how social distancing can be observed so we can work out how many children we can have safely in any class and the school as a whole. Please be assured that the overriding factor in our decision making will be the safety of the children and the staff who are responsible for them.

In order to find out how many children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 are likely to attend from 01 June, we have sent out a survey for parents to complete. Thanks to those parents who have completed the survey. By today, with some surveys not returned, 14 parents stated that they felt they would be sending their child back in June, although many with an added caveat that they are still unsure.

You are your child's parent and therefore you make the choice about if they should return to school or not. The government has stated this. For a few families it has been essential for their children to attend school (at Seaton Delaval First School) since schools were closed on 20 March. We believe it is right to provide school childcare for these pupils and families.

We know there are a number of reasons why some people will choose to send their children back to school from 01 June and why some will keep them at home. For some of you, your child returning to school will be borne out of necessity. You may be a critical worker who has been working from home but have now been asked to return to work. No new guidance has been released to allow grandparents to resume the roles that many of you rely on to support child care. Some of you may feel that the time is right for your child to return to school for their mental health and well-being. On the other hand, some of you may feel that it is too early for them to return to school and you are worried about their safety. This is something that we understand and empathise with.

We feel we must be completely transparent and honest with you about what school will look like and how it will be in June. This is so you can make informed choices. These bullet points summarise some of the measures and actions that we will have to take to ensure safety for all- these refer directly to the DfE guidance we have received this week. Any parents and children returning will be asked to sign a new home school agreement to keep to these new measures and rules so I can keep the children and staff safe.

Preparing the site

- We are carrying out extensive risk assessments of the school reopening, using guidance from the DfE and local authority. This includes the risks to pupils, staff, visitors, volunteers, parents and contractors.
- All classrooms will have all unnecessary furniture and equipment removed and all soft furnishings removed.

Reviewing staff availability

- We do not know how many staff are available to work as some staff are waiting for confirmation of arrangements at their own child's school or nursery before they can commit to their working schedule. Some staff may be shielding due to their own medical needs or to protect vulnerable family members.

Maximum safe group size

- Class sizes will be a maximum of 15, as directed by the DfE. Maintaining social distance of 2 metres within our classrooms with 15 children will be extremely difficult, even though our classrooms are considerably larger than in many schools.

Staffing and teaching groups

- Children will be divided in to groups with one teacher per group and not necessarily with the same groups of children they were with in March. They may not be with the teacher or in the classroom they had in March.
- They will have to remain with that group of children for the duration of the day. They cannot mix with the groups of children in the other classrooms.
- We are working on different models of what the week will look like. We may not be able to offer the normal Monday to Friday pattern to all pupils. We are looking at models that include some children coming in on different days and school being closed for deep cleaning.

Practical steps to reduce risk

- We are looking at ways to limit contact in the corridors, such as a one-way system.
- Children will have set times for the toilet which will need to be cleaned after they have been used. Only one child will be allowed to go to the toilet at a time.
- Year 1 children will sit at tables 2m apart. Children in Reception and Nursery will do activities based at individual work stations or work areas.
- Children will work at their tables, work stations or work areas. They will not sit on the carpet.
- Children must have a full set of washed, clean clothes on every day. They do not need to wear school uniform.
- They will not be able to bring anything from home- no reading books, no packed lunch boxes, no water bottles.
- When any other equipment is used it will then need to be cleaned before other children use or touch it.
- All children will be provided with a packed lunch (Reception and Year 1) and they will eat this outdoors (weather permitting) or in the classroom if it is wet. There will be no hot meals and we will not be using the dining room.
- We will provide all children with a new water bottle which will be left in school at the end of each day and cleaned.

- We will provide each pupil with a pupil pack or tray that contains the equipment that will only be used and touched by them. These will be cleaned at the end of the day. We already have pupil packs in school.
- We will not be sending home reading books or any other resources.
- When outside, playing equipment like the climbing frame and bikes will not be able to be used as it is recommended these are cleaned afterwards and we would not have that facility or staff to do that at that stage.

Planning and delivering learning

- Children will do the same work at school as is being sent home via remote learning.
- They will have some lessons that involve a lot of independent learning as the teacher will not be able to stand side by side or sit next to them to give them the targeted support needed.
- The teacher needs to keep social distance when teaching- currently 2 metres.

Changes to routines for staff and pupils

- Only one parent is allowed to drop off their child.
- This parent is NOT allowed to enter the school building.
- Drop off and pick up times will be staggered; parents may not congregate outside classroom doors.

Communication with parents

- Daily contact or conversations between staff and parents will be done at a distance of 2m.
- Communication via School360, Tapestry and email will be encouraged.

Health and safety

- The classroom will be cleaned throughout the day. The bins will be emptied and tables cleaned and sprayed throughout. The classroom will be deep cleaned at the end of every day too.
- If children fall over or have a toileting accident they will be encouraged to change themselves and clean their scrape or cut. I do not know at this point how much PPE or how many masks we can source, and personally, I do not want staff having to wear masks as this will scare the children. If this is not possible the parent will be called to collect them so they can do that at home.
- Any child showing symptoms of Covid-19 will be isolated from their peers. Supervising staff will have to wear PPE. Parents will be telephoned to collect their child.

Remote learning

- Remote learning will continue for those children who are not attending school.

We do not want to alarm parents by sharing this information but we do think parents need to understand what school will look like in June. We want to give you the full picture, rather than saying that school will reopen and it will all be the same as it was in March. We will not be going back to normal- school is going to look very different for a long time to come. All schools are having to make significant changes to the way they operate.

All our plans are focused on the safety of our children, families and staff at Seghill First School and working towards a time when all children are back at school playing with their friends, interacting with staff and feeling happy and safe.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely
Tracey Chappell
Headteacher

Steph Hall
Chair of governors

