



OXFORD DIOCESAN
BOARD OF EDUCATION

NORTH LEIGH C E PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Dear Parents and Carers

We hope that this letter finds you and your family safe and well.

In the spirit of honest and transparent communication, which has served us well during this crisis, we are now writing to you following the Government's further announcements on education in the last week, so you are aware of our decision making processes and our future planning.

Inviting Back Additional Pupils Where There is Capacity

As you will be aware, the DfE have recognized the impossibility of their ambition to get all children back to school for the last month of the summer term and have now left decisions about inviting back additional pupils to individual school leaders (in recognition that all schools face different challenges posed by their individual context). Their current guidance states:

There is no expectation on primary schools to welcome back additional children where they do not have the capacity to do so.

Primary schools should only welcome back additional children where:

they have already made provision available for children of critical workers, vulnerable children, and children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 and have ensured as many as possible are able to attend (especially for those who would particularly benefit from being in school because of other disadvantage)

they can accommodate more children while still following the approaches set out in the protective measures guidance and their own risk assessment

they do not require additional funding, staff or classrooms to do so. If schools have access to space on other school sites (for example, local secondary schools, if that is feasible alongside the secondary offer) they may use this, taking care to ensure children stay in allocated groups. However, other community buildings (such as village halls) should not be used to expand capacity this term, while they remain closed in line with the government's roadmap.

As you will realise, we have had to adopt a part time model in order to be able to accommodate children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in line with current Government safety guidance and are frustrated that this continued guidance, which is ambiguous in some parts and very prescriptive in others, does not make it straightforward for us to admit more children.

The limitations on welcoming back more children in our school context lie in having to continue to prioritise cohorts identified by the Government; access to toilet facilities without undue risk of cross contamination between bubbles; the strict adherence to no more than 15 children being allowed per bubble and, linked to this, available staffing.

Were we able to combine any current bubbles we would, but this would result in bubbles greater than 15 in all cohorts and we have been informed this is not allowed in line with our risk assessment underwritten by ODST. Given how we are currently operating in the school site, we could possibly give more provision to some cohorts already attending but this would seem to doubly disadvantage cohorts and children who have to stay at home by impacting negatively on the amount of time staff would be able to give to our home learning and the regular contact that I know many of you appreciate; we think changing this is unfair.

This leaves us with the option of potentially inviting children in Years 2 - 5 in half class groups for a limited visit with their class teacher, which though a very small offer, I do think would support children's mental health and wellbeing by allowing them to reconnect with school, teachers and their classmates this side of the summer holiday. However, this process in itself relies on staff being able to move safely between the bubble they are currently working with and the two halves of their own class.

In the hope of being able to offer this opportunity, we have sought clarification from OCC on whether there is any advice about whether staff moving between bubbles is permissible after a period of time with no contact. Whilst OCC have sent out guidance, supported by PHE, to schools suggesting that moving staff between bubbles, when absolutely necessary is possible if staff have a period of 48 hours between working with different children, the DfE, when I contacted them directly to confirm this, stated:

Please note, we are only able to offer advice in accordance with the official government advice published on the gov.uk website.

The below website has the most up to date government guidance regarding your query and all further guidance will be updated with any new developments on here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools>

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, so children, young people and staff where possible, should only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group should stay away from other people and groups.

Given this contradiction in the information, we have drawn up a plan which will enable us to invite half of each cohort from Years 2 - Year 5 for one day with their current class teacher in the latter weeks of this term, while allowing for staff to have breaks in contact between bubbles of children for at least 48 hours. The risk assessment around this has been agreed by ODST and I attach the timetable for these visits.

Friday 3 July	Rowan Class (Group A)
Monday 6 July	Hazel Class (Group A)
Tuesday 7 July	Oak Class (Group A)
Friday 10 July	Oak Class (Group B) Rowan Class (Group B)
Monday 13 July	Hazel (Group B) Willow (Group A)
Thursday 16 July	Willow (Group B)

Families will be contacted separately regarding specific groups, times and arrangements for their child's visit. It is, of course, entirely your decision as to whether they attend. The focus of the visit will be reconnection with school, opportunities for socialisation and wellbeing.

In order to support these visits and transition meetings for children new to school this September:
Friday 10 July will be the last day of term for the Reception Blue, Year 1 Green and Year 6 Purple Bubbles;
Tuesday 14 July will be the last day of term for the Reception Red, Year 1 Yellow and Year 6 Orange Bubbles;
Key Worker Bubbles will continue until Friday 17 July and we hope to be able to invite back our Year 6 children on the last day of term too (more details to follow).

Arrangements for September and Transition Between Classes

On Friday, the Secretary of State for Education supported the Prime Minister's earlier assertion that he was 'sure' all pupils would return full-time in September and that the DfE would be publishing guidance about this within the next two weeks.

We obviously welcome this aim and have begun to shape plans for September, taking into account that the majority of our children will have had next to no time in school since 20 March.

Our favoured plan (bearing in mind we have yet to see what limitations the DfE guidance may place on class sizes, social distancing or movement of staff, is as follows:

Thursday 3 and Friday 4 September - Children will return to their CURRENT class teacher. We hope this will help children to feel more confident returning to school and to allow a familiar adult to deal with anxieties and insecurities;

Monday 7 - Friday 11 September - Children will spend the mornings with their CURRENT class teacher and afternoons with their NEW teacher. This will allow the teacher who knows the children best to undertake assessments of learning needs/gaps, while the new teacher can be getting to know them and build relationships in the afternoons.

Monday 14 September onwards children are in new classes with new teachers.

We believe this staged transition will make it easier for children to come back into school after the upheaval this academic year, whilst also allowing some time for teachers familiar with them to create an assessment baseline in core subjects on which the new teacher can immediately begin to build.

We have planned for other scenarios, should the DfE guidance place limitations on class sizes etc or the national situation change before September, but in all of these we hope to incorporate a transition period from childrens' current classes to their new ones.

We have attached a staffing plan so you are aware of who will be teaching your child next year.

Virtual Learning Platform

Could we have changed anything about our preparedness for the pandemic? It would be to have had an established virtual learning platform through which to deliver home learning.

We did look at adopting one at speed in the early days of the crisis but felt that setting this up when children and parents were already remote would cause more problems than it solved. Looking back, with the benefit of hindsight (and taking into account how long children have been absent from school), it may have been worth the pain of the teething troubles - though the number of you engaging regularly with home learning and sharing work with your child's class teacher is in line with national figures, so we hope our offer through the school website and class emails has been a sufficient support.

Nevertheless, with the potential prospect of winter spikes in infection and regional lockdowns, we are determined not to be caught out again and are currently trialing Seesaw as a remote learning and communication platform. We have considered other systems and discussed options with other schools and our IT support, but feel that this will be best at including our full age range meaningfully.

From September we will be issuing children with logins and using Seesaw to deliver and receive homework, in the hope that should we need it, a more effective system will be in place for delivering remote learning.

Catch-Up Programmes

The DfE has also announced this week funding for a 'catch-up plan'. This appears to be a combination of extra funding coming directly to school and subsidized 1:1 tutoring (though we believe that this provision will be aimed more at secondary pupils).

Whilst we welcome additional funding in support of enhanced provision, we have yet to see any detail of this programme, other than the press release and it is not yet clear how funding will be distributed (for example will schools with higher levels of disadvantaged children receive more money, and will money be shared equally between primary and secondary schools?). If all funds available for schools were equally distributed per child, then estimates suggest that the funding is worth c.£90 per child.

However, whatever the funding available, our first priority is ensuring the emotional wellbeing of your children. We will then work to catch up on any gaps and promote accelerated progress next year and we do not want children nor you as parents, to be over anxious about this. Experience and research tells us that once children return to familiar learning routines and daily practice they soon catch up on work missed over relatively long absences. We have also been impressed at how little learning seems to have been 'lost' by those children who are already returning and how many of them seem to have developed increased learning resilience during their time at home.

You should also rest assured that where we do feel that there are gaps that need extra support in order to be addressed, we will discuss these with you and do our utmost to provide effective support. Equally if you have concerns about your child's learning, please do not hesitate to discuss these with your child's teacher.

Summer Provision

The Government has given no firm guidance around expectations for any provision for learning or child care over the summer and the Secretary of State has said previously that he does not expect schools to be open. In light of this, unless we receive directives in the next few weeks, Key Worker provision will cease at 5.30pm on Friday 17 July. We are very grateful to our staff who have worked as a team to provide this continuous cover since school closed to the majority of children in March.

We are currently talking to some 'summer holiday club' providers, but think that unless the Government relaxes guidance around working with bubbles of children (limited to 15), running such provision will not be cost effective for providers or will be so costly as to be prohibitive for most parents.

We will of course come back to you if we make any progress here.

Reports

We are preparing 'revised' end of year reports to come home or be sent in the post from 3 July. Teachers have limited their comments to attitude to learning and core subjects and have given an indication of your child's attainment level at the last assessment point (a week before school closed). We hope that this will give you some tangible evidence of whether your child was working towards, at or beyond age related expectation at that point in the year and in Year 2 and Year 6 they have made a prediction of what they might have achieved in the SATs.

More clarification will come out with the reports themselves. As always if you would like to discuss the report in more detail you will be able to contact your child's class teacher.

New Starters

I am aware that there are several parents who will have children due to start school in September. These parents should already have received a New Parent Pack. We have made transition plans for our new starters, which run alongside the enhanced transition for all other children. These details will come out to you in a separate letter.

In the meantime please be aware that the school website has a [New Starter Page](#) packed with information and things you can share with your child.

Polite Reminder

Please can we remind parents who are currently dropping off and picking up children, that they should arrive at and leave the school site promptly and that this should involve one adult (and no other children where at all possible). We are aware that for some of you the risks of meeting up with parents outside your child's bubble, not keeping your distance or bringing along other family members may seem very small but for others, who may live with more vulnerable children or adults, or who are more anxious about the current situation, they present real dangers and concerns. Thank you.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and understanding of the challenges we face in school and especially to those of you who have contacted us directly to express your appreciation.

Yours faithfully

Deborah Seccull
Headteacher

Sophie Warner
Chair of Governors