



# Eastlea update - 15/5/20



Dear Parents/Carers,

Since the Government announcement on Sunday we have all been left with lots of questions about the proposed phased return of schools, so apologies for this rather 'long' weekly update.

You will no doubt have heard, seen or read lots of information about the **conditional proposals** for the reopening of schools as part of the government's staged response to the Coronavirus pandemic. In one way it is very positive that we now have been given an outline timetable of what **MAY** be considered **IF** the conditions are right. However, like us you will have many questions about the practicalities of this proposal and I am sure you can imagine the 'headaches' for staff in school in trying to arrange this.

I must be honest and say that we are feeling nervous about what we are being asked to do – and the fact that Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 (and now also Nursery) have been earmarked for the first phase of return came as a surprise! Following the return of these year groups the government also hope that conditions will be right to allow for the return of other year groups for the last 4 weeks of the summer term. Alongside all of this, of course, schools are also being asked to maintain our provision for children of critical key workers and vulnerable families as well as keeping everyone safe despite the larger numbers in school. Bearing all of that in mind, there are no firm details as yet of what this may look like, but I do want to set out what I consider to be the '**Eastlea ground rules**' for starting to think about a return and what any next steps may be.

1. Our absolute **TOP PRIORITY** is the safety of the pupils/staff and parents/wider family members of our school community.
2. There will be strict routines for cleaning, hand washing and social distancing (as far as we can) for pupils in school and we will be designing guidelines for children when they are on site and also for you as parents/carers in terms of drop offs and collection which limit the number of people on site at any one time, e.g. *staggering drop off times, limiting the number of parents who accompany children to school, using separate gate/entrance door access for different year groups, not having groups of parents gathering on site etc.* All of this will be shared with you next week once we have had time to assimilate the further guidance which is being published on a daily basis.
3. The children have had enough upheaval and we want to consider their health and wellbeing (both physical and emotional) when we do return, with a safe, calm, measured approach to this process. All families have faced difficult times so any plans need to be carefully considered.
4. When children return they will be in smaller groups and I feel it is important that children will be in a group of their classmates with their class teacher who is well known to them, rather than distributing them with different teachers throughout the school.
5. We can't fit 15 children in our classrooms and maintain appropriate social distancing. We have tried it and we can manage about 8-10. If and when pupils do return initially it will perhaps be in half classes for part time (perhaps 2 days per week?)
6. When the first year groups return we can't accommodate any siblings pupils may have in other classes.
7. Nursery is our biggest concern – they are the largest cohort and they are the youngest children. Social distancing and hygiene systems for this class will be the hardest of all to enforce/maintain.
8. Discussions have taken place with secondary schools to ensure that Year 6 pupils who return will be supported in the transition process to CLV (or elsewhere) as well as we can – albeit 'virtually' to start with, but we aim to create as many opportunities as possible to ease any transition 'worries'.
9. Any children who have been attending school in recent weeks of parents/carers who are critical key workers or vulnerable families will still have the option to be in school. Those pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan for Special Needs are also still entitled to attend school (from any year group) and this is something that class teachers will be in touch with you about.
10. For children not in school then arrangements for support with home learning via online resources and/or work packs will still be provided.
11. Vouchers for families entitled to benefit based FSM will still be continuing. For any pupil attending school for full days they will need to bring their own packed lunch which will be eaten in school. We will not be reopening the school kitchens (due to staff shielding as well as avoiding potential difficulties with social distancing).

### **What next... for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6?**

As a matter of priority for parents/carers of pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 we need to find out how many pupils we are likely to have in school if a decision is made for this to go ahead from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Many of you will be anxious about a return for your child(ren) and will be balancing their/your desire to return to Eastlea versus concerns about their safety. We fully understand this and are aware that parents may not want their children to be in school even if the government say that they are free to return. If this is the decision you make it has been stated that parents/carers will not be fined for keeping their children off school at the current time.

***Please send a message to staff via Seesaw/Tapestry or the school Facebook account/email as soon as possible if you have a child in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 to let us whether you:***

- a. will definitely be wanting your child to be in school from 1<sup>st</sup> June IF the government deem that the criteria have been met for this to happen***
- b. are unsure about whether you will want your child to return***
- c. will not be sending your child to school from 1<sup>st</sup> June due to shielding/self-isolation or other safety concerns***

Only when we have the above information can we plan more seriously what we will be able to offer to those who do wish their children to be in school. IF the government criteria are met and IF we deem it safe to do so, then subject to change, our initial thoughts are that we will start from 1<sup>st</sup> June with half class groups of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 perhaps for 2 days per week, with time for a deep clean of classroom areas between the days the different groups are in. (N.B. There will no longer be a Staff Training Day on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June).

### **What next...for Nursery?**

In order to have time to address the many additional safety, hygiene and social distancing concerns which need to be sorted out prior to any Nursery pupils returning we are not planning to have children from this class in school from 1<sup>st</sup> June.

We would appreciate parents of Nursery pupils contacting Mrs Shimmin via Tapestry early next week to let her know your thoughts about whether you would want your child to be in school or not when the time is right (see the a, b, c question above).

If the return of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 groups is successfully negotiated from 1<sup>st</sup> June, we may feel able to start to think about Nursery, prioritising small groups of the older pupils initially (perhaps from w/b 8<sup>th</sup> June) before arrangements for the younger Nursery children are considered.

### **What next...for Year 2, Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5?**

Until further guidance is received about plans to have other year groups back in school, online learning resources or work packs from class teachers will continue to be provided for children in these classes. If the national 'picture' continues to be more positive then we may be able to look to reintroduce pupils from Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5 for the last four weeks of the school year, but at the moment there are no clear plans for this. We will keep you posted!

### **THANK YOU!**

These are difficult and uncertain times, and I wanted to end this letter by saying a huge thank you for your continued support of the Eastlea staff as we work to do the very best we can for your children. This week we have been 'surprised' by some lovely thank you gifts which are much appreciated by the staff team.

"Stay alert, control the virus, save lives"..... and most importantly stay safe and well!

Yours sincerely, Miss E Beeston, Head Teacher

