

Eastlea update 31/8/21

Dear Parents / Carers,

I hope everyone has had a good summer and our Eastlea families have been safe and well throughout the holiday period. As we enter the last week of the summer holidays we are aware that thoughts will be turning to the new school year. We have all become used to the fact that national plans and advice may change at short notice, but this update will provide current answers to some questions you may have about what the new term procedures will be when the children return on **Tuesday 7th September**.

The good news is that DfE guidance states that all children will return to school in September and that, although we will remain cautious, some of the COVID restrictions which we had to have in place last school year are going to be changed to allow a return to more 'normal' school systems. The staff are very pleased about this!

Getting back to 'normal'...what does that mean for Eastlea pupils?

- We will return to our usual pre-COVID start and finish times for the school day, so doors will open at 8.50am (8.45am for Y5/Y6) and all children will be dismissed at 3.15pm [see below for further details]. ***Pupils arriving after 9am will be marked as late, so in some cases you may need to reset your alarm clocks a little earlier!!***
- Children will be able to sit in groups within their classes rather than alongside each other.
- Children will have more freedom to move around the school rather than sticking to just their class base.
- In Early Years there will be more opportunity to have the wider range of experiences and activities for the pupils which had had to be curtailed during the pandemic.
- In the dining hall we can allow children to sit opposite one another and have more classes in the hall at a given time.
- Playground zones are no longer required so at breaks and lunchtimes there will be the chance for children to play outside with friends in other classes.
- Clubs are no longer limited to just two year groups at a time and children can be alongside those from other classes.
- Year 6 can start to return to their important roles of supporting children in other classes, *e.g. as sports leaders, librarians or Nursery helpers*.
- Assemblies can begin to take place so that we can go back to having the whole Eastlea community together face to face in a well ventilated hall, rather than via Zoom.
- If a child or staff member tests positive for COVID there is no longer the requirement that the whole class 'bubble' will need to be off school to self-isolate. The individual concerned will need to isolate for 10 days, but unless anyone else develops symptoms/has a positive test they can remain in school [there is further detail below about the COVID measures which we do have to follow].

What measures will still be in place to continue to keep everyone safe:

- Regular hand washing/use of hand sanitiser – on arrival, after break, before eating, after lunchtime, when moving to a different classroom (e.g. the computer suite), after coughing or sneezing and before going home.
- 'Catch it, bin it, kill it' approach for sneezes and coughs.
- Increased cleaning especially of regularly touched surfaces.
- Increased ventilation in all rooms with windows and doors open to improve air flow.
- Almost every member of staff is now fully vaccinated and all Eastlea staff will continue to take twice weekly lateral flow tests (Government guidance is that this system will be in place until a review at the end of September).
- Individual water bottles will still be required for all children and these will be kept by pupils in their classrooms for use during the day.
- Parents will continue to drop off children outside, rather than coming into the school building.
- Any pupils using the school transport taxi must still wear masks while they are in the car/minibus.

Routines for dropping off/collecting your children:

Although the timings for arrival/departure are how we used to do things pre-COVID, we are aware that to start with it is going to 'feel' busy around school at these times and while our aim is to get 'back to normal', we still feel that a cautious approach is best and ask that you support us with the following measures to keep everyone safe.

- Strict 2m markings/social distancing will no longer be in place but we ask that you respect others, be aware that many will still be anxious and therefore keep your distance and not gather in large groups or hang around school following drop off/pick up times.
- Masks are no longer specifically required on the school site however, we understand that many will still feel that wearing a face covering is something they wish to do to protect themselves and others while on site.
- Please continue to limit the number of adults accompanying a child to/from school.
- We will continue to use the COVID drop off plans from last year to avoid having adults coming into the school building and to prevent large numbers congregating in the small areas right beside the doors *[see below for more details]*.

Class	Arrival time	Departure time
Nursery	8.50am using the same entry point/drop off arrangements as last year	11.50am – from the same gate (for those attending morning sessions) 3.15pm – from the same gate (for those staying all day)
Reception	8.50am – staff will receive the children from the first wooden gate beside the computer suite as they did last year.	3.15pm – from the same gate as arrival <i>[N.B. those who were morning only Nursery pupils last year will be collected at 12.30pm from this gate for the first 4 days after they have had lunch]</i>
Year 1 and Year 2	8.50am – staff will open the wooden gates for children to go into school as they did last year	3.15pm – classes will be brought out by staff to the wooden gates for children to be dismissed.
Year 3 and Year 4	8.50am – staff will open the wooden gates for children to go into school as they did last year	3.15pm – classes will be brought out by staff to the wooden gates/just beyond for children to be dismissed.
Year 5 and Year 6	8.45am – door will be opened for children to come up to class. Children will come onto the school site independently and gather in the space through the wooden gate by the pupil entrance door (any accompanying adults should say farewell at the main gate and not come onto the school site).	3.15pm – classes will be brought out by staff via the main entrance and be dismissed from the main gate. Any adults should meet them there.

Keeping in touch, meeting staff and seeing the classrooms:

Tapestry and Seesaw will be used to provide regular communication with your child's class teacher and the vast majority should by now have these systems set up (unless you are new to either platform).

Class teachers/support staff will also be available at the start/end of the school day at the wooden gates or main gates on various days if you need to speak to them and of course I will be at the front of the school each day if there is anything I can help with.

We are also aware that you may be keen to see your child's new classroom and are working on ideas to allow this to happen safely within the coming weeks.

COVID update regarding testing and expectations for school:

- You may decide that as part of your family arrangements your child will take regular lateral flow tests at home if you have no COVID symptoms. **If the result of a child's lateral flow test is positive, then school should be informed, a PCR test should be booked to confirm and your child should not attend school.**
- **If your child has symptoms of COVID then they should not attend school.** As before, you should keep them off, inform school and seek a PCR test.
 - If the result is negative, they can return to school when they are well enough (this needs to be 48 hours after any signs of sickness & diarrhoea if this was one of the reasons for absence).
 - **If the test is positive then they must remain at home and self-isolate for 10 days.**
 - If the result is positive it is also strongly recommended that all other members of the household seek a PCR test to make sure that they do not also have COVID, but following this, as long as they are well, then other children from the family can attend school. It is recommended in this situation that if you have no symptoms you may want to continue with twice weekly lateral flow tests just to make sure that there are no further COVID cases in your household.
- Since 16th August, the rules are now that **other children under the age of 18 and adult household members who have been 'double jabbed' for over 14 days do not need to isolate pending a test result for someone in their household or if the result is positive.** If any adults are not double jabbed then they are still required to self-isolate for 10 days even if they have no symptoms.

The individual who has tested positive MUST NOT attend school and is required to self-isolate and we understand that in terms of childcare this may create issues for some families in getting other pupils to Eastlea. **If this is a problem for you then please contact me in school to see if we can help to come up with a plan.**
- If any child is required to self-isolate then remote learning will be provided, via Seesaw/Tapestry or a paper based work pack, as long as they are well enough to access and complete the tasks.
- Any close contacts of someone who tests positive will be identified and contacted via NHS Test and Trace.
- Parents/carers of groups of pupils who may be possible contacts of a positive case in Eastlea will be informed by school and advised to:
 - be vigilant for symptoms
 - keep pupils off school if they become symptomatic, or
 - go for a PCR test if they are identified as close contacts by Test and Trace.
- If the number of positive COVID cases at Eastlea shows a significant increase or there is an increase of rates of transmission in the local area (e.g. *a possible threshold for this could be if 10% of Eastlea pupils or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period*) then advice from the NCC Public Health Team will be sought. Contingency measures will be put in place to increase restrictions in school for a limited time. **An outbreak management plan (also known as a contingency plan) is in place to facilitate this should the need arise, however the priority at all times will be to maintain school attendance.**
- We will also seek Public Health advice if a pupil or staff member is admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Hospitalisation could indicate increased severity of illness or a new variant of concern.

I apologise that this update includes a lot of information, but I thought it best to share it with you this week before the children return on Tuesday 7th. We are all very much looking forward to getting the new term started safely and if there is anything you wish to discuss before that or questions you want to ask, then please get in touch with your child's class teacher via Seesaw/Tapestry or ring school.

Miss E Beeston, Head Teacher

