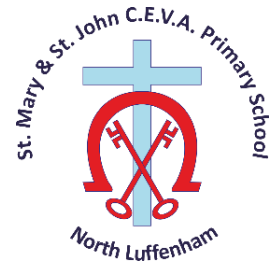


St. Mary & St. John

Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

North Luffenham, Rutland



Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Wilce

17 July 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you and your family remain safe and well as we fast approach the very unconventional end of an extraordinary and challenging academic year. We have just said farewell to our Year 6 class of 2020 this afternoon and our thoughts now turn to the new academic year.

I apologise in advance that this is a long letter, but a vital one. It sets out our school's plans for the new academic year to allow for a safe return. We are aiming to make the return as normal as possible, but inevitably the current situation around COVID-19 means our usual way of working will not always be possible. Throughout this period, we have always prioritised the health, wellbeing and safety of our school community first and foremost as we have planned to meet the aspirations of the new DFE guidance. We couldn't have done this without your support. It has, as always, been very much appreciated.

The government has confirmed that they expect all school pupils to return to compulsory education on-site in the new academic year. Having closely monitored the partial opening of school over the past weeks and risk assessed the situation, we feel able to ask all pupils to return to school fulltime on Tuesday 1 September 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirusoutbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

It is not practical or safe to return to the 'old normal'. We are taking a measured, cautious approach to enable all pupils to access a 'broad and ambitious curriculum.' (Gavin Williamson). To help us address the recommendations in the new guidance and specifically so as not to put the whole school at risk of a blanket closure should we have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school, we will be trialling a change to our school timetable and the length of the school day during the Autumn Term. **We will continue to maintain the staggered start and end to the school day but additionally school will finish earlier on a Friday afternoon.** We are ensuring that teaching time and contact with children remains well above previously published old government minimum requirements and the children will not lose out by the changes being introduced. We will fully review the impact of this change at the end of each three-week period.

Rationale - Why are we doing this?

Improved provision for children

- Minimising crossing of bubbles. The guidance states that children and staff, as much as is practicably possible, should remain in separate bubbles. Staff may move between bubbles if necessary. Social distancing rules have been relaxed, but it still states that it should be maintained as much as is possible and especially for adults
- Consistency: children will be taught by their class teacher(s) or a specialist teacher (music/PE) for the whole week.
In terms of 'recovery' many children may have lost their sense of belonging - a consistent adult will help with their recovery - being ready to learn
- Staff that were previously covering lessons for teachers can now be deployed to offer additional intervention sessions, additional specialist teaching or support to address gaps in attainment due to prolonged absences from school during the coronavirus pandemic
- Additional capacity for social and emotional support - mental health and well-being
- Potential opportunities for additional targeted intervention on a Friday afternoon when restrictions are lifted and following consultation on the success of the trial period

Lessons learned from school closure

- Staggered start at the beginning and end of the school day has provided a calmer, more orderly and quicker start/end to the day while adhering to government guidance on social distancing (particularly for the adults)
- The staggered starts have alleviated several issues with access and safety and improved community relations e.g. car parking around the school site and wider village
- Retaining good hygiene measures and practices – handwashing, wiping down, etc.

Improved provision for staff

- Minimising crossing of 'bubbles'
- Importantly, the new timetable will help support the teaching staff as they adopt the same way they have been working over the summer term in school. The restrictions mean they remain with their children throughout the day, with only a short period of down time at lunchtime. This makes for an intense day, as we cannot run rotas for break duties and have lunch supervisors looking after mixed bubbles.
- Teachers will have the opportunity to plan together with colleagues (sharing, disseminating and building on the successful practices established during lockdown)
- Protected time for staff training, coaching and mentoring

Other considerations

- This strategy will allow the school to deliver lessons and intervention sessions in 'bubbles of 30' from September in line with current guidance from central Government
- Some working families may have concerns about childcare arrangements when school closes early on a Friday afternoon. In order to address these concerns and support families where there is no alternative care, the school will cater for children *who meet a specific criteria** to stay in school and be cared for until 3:15pm. The children will potentially be grouped into UKS2, LKS2, EY/KS1 bubbles. There will be no cost to families for this additional time in school.
- * *Both parents are working away from the family home, or sole parent if a single parent and no alternative arrangements or childcare can be made available*
- * *Both parents are in full time education, or sole parent if a single parent*
- * *Your child has an EHCP. You may choose whether you wish them to be cared for in school on a Friday afternoon.*
- Little Saints preschool will operate fully every day, five days a week.
- We will be able to offer a full lunch facility. Lunches will be staggered. There will be no self-service and there will be only two classes in the school hall at any one time, with thorough cleaning down inbetween
- School transport will be available but specific safety measures are likely to be in place
- This strategy is effectively used in a number of primary schools in other counties
- A local secondary school currently closes early on a Wednesday afternoon for similar reasons. Several primary schools are trialling a very similar strategy during the autumn term whilst COVID-19 restrictions are still in place.

Wraparound Care

Initially, until we are settled, we will not be offering wraparound breakfast and after school care but we hope to have this up and running as soon as it is safe to do so. We appreciate that parents have to work but we hope that you understand our reasoning and cautious approach to bringing the whole school back together again. By operating wraparound care, it will mean that staff and children from different classes are together in the hall, seated and separated on different 'class tables'. We will watch and analyse the national and regional picture over the break and as the term starts in September.

Contingency Planning

The government has asked schools to make contingency plans for partial or full closure due to the coronavirus hitting locally within school or regionally, forcing an area lockdown. They are also mindful that we are returning with the autumn and winter ahead of us and the unknown effect this will have on COVID-19 infection rates. Our plan will be to provide the same home learning provision that we have been doing over the past summer term, subject to staff not being ill themselves.

It is most important that you, as parents and guardians have an emergency/contingency plan in place too. If we have a positive case of the virus there will be an immediate closure of one or more bubbles for an isolation period, worse still we may be forced to close the whole school. Public Health England will advise the school and track and trace will be used to determine our course of action.

Please be responsible and thoughtful in your actions before sending your child into school. If there is any doubt or risk that you have been in contact with someone with the virus, please keep your child at home and contact the school immediately. All families and staff remain eligible to request a test if symptoms are displayed or someone becomes unwell.

Additional DfE information Welcoming schools back in September 2020

It is the government's ambition that all children, in all year groups, will return to school full time from the beginning of the autumn term. The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased since schools restricted their opening to most pupils in March, the NHS Test and Trace system is up and running and we understand more about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments in schools. As a result, the government has asked schools to plan for all children to return from the start of the new academic year.

The scientific evidence shows that coronavirus (COVID-19) presents a much lower risk to children than adults of becoming severely ill, and there is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults. Of course, there will still be risks while coronavirus (COVID-19) remains in the community, and that is why schools will be asked to put in place a range of protective measures.

In order to effectively manage the risks that remain, things will continue to be a bit different when our children return to school for the new academic year. The DfE guidance sets out some of the changes and protective measures the government is asking schools to put in place and what parents, carers, children and young people will need to do to help ensure schools are as safe as possible for everyone. The DfE has stated that if schools follow this guidance, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.

However, they also acknowledge the way different schools implement some of the requirements will need to differ based on their individual circumstances. There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Schools need to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk for their setting.

Grouping children

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. They have been used in the summer term in recognition that children, and especially the youngest children, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other and this provides an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible. However, the use of small groups does restrict the normal operation of schools and presents both educational and logistical challenges, including the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as playgrounds, dining halls, and toilets, and the provision of specialist teaching.

Primary schools have been asked to create bubbles the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible. We recognise that younger children will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all-or-nothing' options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep children in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport. Siblings may also be in different groups. Endeavouring to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between children will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

Teachers and other staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable. However, wherever possible this should be kept to a minimum.

As the end of term approaches rapidly, I wanted to say a final thank you to you. The patience, kindness, flexibility and understanding that has continued to characterise your response and support for our school during this difficult time has been outstanding. Throughout this period, we have always prioritised the health, wellbeing and safety of our school community first and foremost as we have planned to meet the aspirations of the new DFE guidance. We couldn't have done this without your support. It has, as always, been very much appreciated.

Our school's operational plan for families:

- Arrival/ Departure times are staggered by alphabetical order of surname



Mon-Thurs and Little Saints

8.45am A – De 3.15pm

8.50am Di – L 3.20pm

8.55am M – Z 3.25pm

Fri lunchtime finish

1.20pm

1.25pm

1.30pm

Parents are advised to arrive PROMPTLY but not early. Please wait until your designated time before you come down the lane to school. Ensure social distancing is maintained in the designated area, then leave the premises promptly via the one-way system and do not loiter.



- Children should be accompanied by one parent/ carer only.
- Year 5/6 pupils may walk/cycle unescorted, with permission.
- We ask that you walk or cycle to school if possible.
- No staff or parent cars may enter the drive down to school or the school car park between 8.35am and 9.00am and 3.10pm and 3.35pm, as the roadway needs to be kept clear to enable walking at a social distance to be maintained.
- There will be clear, one-way signage to the drop off and pick up points. On arrival, enter by the normal school gate. Children will be greeted by staff by the double gates (where the Friday ice cream stall usually is). Exit by double gates. On collection, exactly the same but please remember to maintain social distancing if waiting.



- Parents should only go to the school office if absolutely necessary. All communications should be made by phone and/or email if possible. There will be no entry to the building.



- Everyone will wash their hands on arrival at school, before each lesson, before eating, after toileting, before leaving the school and when moving from indoors to outdoors and vice versa.

- Surfaces, door handles, sinks and tables will be disinfected throughout the day and at lunchtimes as well by the teaching staff.



- Each bubble is one class. All desks (where used) will face the front and rooms will be well ventilated.



- The children will be taught about hygiene and keeping safe. They will be encouraged to participate in activities in different ways to avoid being too close together as much as possible. We will include fun activities around rebuilding relationships and ensuring they have good social and emotional health along with taking learning outdoors as much as possible and enjoying physical activity.

School uniform and school equipment

Everyone will wear full school uniform.

Coat and wellies essential. We plan to be outdoors a lot!

- Lockers will not be used as these are crowded communal spaces. All equipment will be stored under desks. NO RUCKSACKS WILL BE ALLOWED.

PE kits with trainers in drawstring PE/swim bags only.

A book bag or zipped bag/folder only for books. This will be stored in your child's tray.





ONE pencil case with 12 colouring pencils, 12 felt tip pens (maximum), a small rubber and pencil sharpener NO HIGHLIGHTERS. (All other equipment will be provided in your child's tray) This will stay in school.

Named Water bottle filled daily with fresh water
Medication



Lunches and snacks

A school lunch can be booked via ParentPay. Alternatively, a healthy packed lunch may be sent in. Staff will continue to monitor packed lunches. No nut products, including Nutella or similar spreads. No chocolate bars or sweets please.

You may wish to send a breaktime fruit snack, preferably in its own natural wrapper! Due to the staggered lunches, it is a longer morning for the older children.

Each bubble will eat lunch in the dining room together with one other class, separated by screens. There will be no self-service.

Illness

If your child is displaying any signs of illness or you have cause for concern, please err on the side of caution and keep them at home until you are confident they are well.

Whole school gatherings and assemblies will not be held

We shall continue to meet for collective worship daily using Teams and Zoom, and/or as a class bubble. We will continue to hold our weekly celebration assembly online.

Friday afternoon care

Staff will provide childcare for those children needing to remain in school until 3.15pm. Dependent on numbers, the children will form UKS2, LKS2, EY/KS1 bubbles.

Wraparound Care and Afterschool clubs

Information to follow in September.

School Bus

Rutland Transport will provide information to registered parents.
There will be no bus on a Friday lunchtime

Again, I apologise for the length of this communication. I appreciate there is a lot of information to take in. Please accept this an outline plan as we move forward towards the new academic year, as anything could change between now and the end of the summer holidays. Please also know that senior leaders and governors have thought long and hard (more soul searching) and discussed at length the logistics of running the school. We have not taken decisions lightly, but we believe we have a workable plan to allow for the full, safe return of everyone in September – and there is nothing we want more than having all the children back and a full, happy and thriving school!

In the meantime, I wish you a pleasant summer break and hope that you can achieve some quality family time together.

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Wilce, Headteacher

Church Street, North Luffenham, Nr. Oakham, Rutland. LE15 8JR

Telephone: 01780 720184 • Email: office@northluffenham.rutland.sch.uk • Website: www.northluffenham.org

Let your light shine Matthew 5:16

