

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your patience and support during this difficult time; I am sure that you can appreciate the complexity of planning for such an uncertain situation. In doing so, we have considered all the advice available from the Government, Department for Education and Hertfordshire County Council. In addition, we have used your responses to create a manageable plan for reopening from June 1st. It is important to highlight however that some, if not all, of the details within this letter are currently provisional - all aspects of the current plan are subject to change in light of further government guidance and regulations.

The information in this letter will include detail of how Gade Valley will operate during Phase 1 of the school reopening. It is very important that all members of our school community follow this (to the letter) in order to minimise risks. Please note that our plan to reopen will not eliminate all risks but will serve to reduce them. It is my hope that this information will build confidence, which in turn will provide all families with a level of assurance.

For the first phase (June 1st – June 12th) reopening, the school have tried to accept as many pupils from the prioritised groups that indicated, from the survey, that they would like their child to return to school from June 1st if provision is available - we will be informing you who these families are separately by text message. At this stage, now the groups have been set, staff directed and spaces allocated, we are unable to accommodate more children; in two weeks-time, we will write to you again to explain new government developments and possible changes to our provision. This will also include a link to a survey asking you if you wish for your child to return during the next phase. I do apologise if this comes across as draconian - I am trying to do my very best in opening the school as safely as possible for as many eligible pupils as possible. In doing so I must ensure that our provision is clear and manageable and by changing it, the safety of our pupils and staff may be compromised.

I must be clear with you that ensuring that pupils keep a safe distance from each other is extremely challenging – in fact it's impossible. Therefore to minimise this we are following two key principles from the Department of Education and Hertfordshire County Council:

- 1) Children should only mix in small consistent groups and these groups should not mix with any other.
- 2) Children to have a 2m gap between their sitting positions. This means that at the moment each class can accommodate between 10-12 pupils.

As a result, during this phase, we have limited capacity of safe spaces and then capacity within those spaces. Our key principles are to keep small groups of children in 'bubbles' to reduce contamination. These bubbles will have their own rooms, toilets, play space and entrance. At no time will these small groups of children interact with any other groups.

It saddens me to say that the building and its uses will be very different to that which the children will be familiar with. It is important that pupils do not expect to return to their usual routines and expectations when they do return. Safety measures around the site will be clear and safe distancing measures



Year 1

and bubble groups will be imperative. We will also, of course, do all we can in supporting and preparing pupils as they return to us.

Each bubble group will have their own space in the school. Within this space they will be encouraged to play and learn at safe distances from one another. They will not however be able to mix with peers from other bubble groups. Arrival times, play times; snack times and lunch times will all be staggered to avoid bubble groups crossing and will be in separate designated spaces. Likewise, outdoor play provision will also be timetabled to reduce cross-over of groups. To clarify, groups will all be able to be outside at the same time in separate areas but will need to enter and exit the building at different times.

We will be working closely with children to ensure they understand the need for these restrictions and will ensure a positive message is communicated to ensure pupils feel safe and confident in their groups with their adults.

Our provision plan as of 19th May 2020:

Bubble Group	Group 1 (Nursery)	Group 2 (Reception)	Group 3 (Year 1)	Group 4 (Key worker 1)	Group 5 (Key worker 2)	Group 6 (Key worker 3)
Classroom	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6
Start Date	June 1st	June 1st	June 1st	June 1st	June 1st	June 1st
Days	Mon-Thu	Mon-Thu	Mon-Thu	Mon-Thu	Mon-Thu	Mon-Thu
Start Time	9.10am	9.20am	9.30am	9.00am	8.40am	8.50am
Collection Time	12.10am	2.30pm	2.40pm	3.10pm	2.50pm	3.00pm
Designated entrance/drop off	Nursery via Nursery Path	Reception gate on top playground	Year 1 gate on top playground	Year 2 gate next to the office	Start of path on the top playground	Start of path on the top playground
Bubble Space	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6
Maximum Bubble Size	12	12	12	12	12	12
Designated Toilets	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6
Designated Play Space	Nursery Garden	Reception Garden and top playground	Field Zone 1	Field Zone 2	Field Zone 3	Field Zone 4
Designated Adults	Mrs Speer Mrs Walker	Mrs Simons Mrs Parkins Ms Field	Mrs Burttt Mrs Cooke	Miss Kavanagh Mrs Bankole Miss Heritage	Mrs Russ Mrs Chapman	Miss Steadman Mrs Happe

*You will be informed via text message if we are able to offer your child a space in any of these groups.

There are a host of other safety considerations and I have included a range of questions that I would anticipate you asking:

Will the children be expected to wear school uniform when they return to school?

No, In regards to safety measures, it is important, to reduce contamination, that children wear clean and fresh clothes each day they attend school. Therefore, it can't be expected that pupils have enough sets of school uniform to adhere to this. Each day, pupils will need to wear comfortable clothing that will support a range of indoor and outdoor activities. If pupils want to wear their uniform that is also fine as long as it is freshly laundered.

Will staff be wearing PPE equipment?

The formal advice suggests PPE equipment will not be needed in most cases unless closer contact is needed e.g. an unwell child or a child who has hurt themselves. However, staff may feel more comfortable wearing equipment and I am happy for them to wear this if they so wish.

Are children allowed to wear PPE equipment?

We do not expect children to wear PPE equipment but if it makes them or you as a parent more comfortable then please feel free to use. School cannot provide this equipment.

Will children be encouraged to maintain hand washing as previous to lockdown?

Absolutely! This is a fundamental safety precaution that will be in place. There will be clear expectations for all pupils and staff to wash their hands several times per day. This will include arriving to and leaving the site as well as at any transition points throughout their school day. Staff will also meet these expectations.

Each group invited into school will also have their own designated group sink space as well as designated toilets that reduce the risk of mixing groups throughout the building.

Will hand-gel be used at the front door? Does the school have sufficient supplies for this?

Hand washing will be the first essential task for all children and staff on arrival to the setting. Where possible we will implement new hand sanitiser stations at each entry and exit point of the building. A full order of all supplies is in the process of being collated and all cleaning products will be available prior to any opening. If for any reason, the school is unable to have an adequate supply of cleaning products, soap or hand gel we will close.

Will the children have the opportunity to complete exercise during the school day?

Outdoor learning and exercise will form a fundamental part of the routine for all children each day. This does not replace the need to exercise outside of school however. Track time and woodland sessions will be timetabled each day. In addition, staff will endeavour to exploit all available opportunities for outdoor learning.

Will parents be guided on social distancing when dropping and collecting children? / What will drop off and collection times look like to protect parents and carers as well and teaching staff and children?

The school site will be operating a one way system for entering and leaving the site. This will be marked out prior to the re-opening and signs will be displayed to remind parents and pupils of this expectation. Each group will also have a designated entrance and exit into school. These details will be shared at the end of this letter. Playground markings will show where parents and children should stand at 2M distance prior to drop off and collection. It is very important that only one adult drops off and collects their child each day.

Can I bring my child in or collect at different times to the rota?

No, it is very important that you stick to your time allocation. This will help to maintain safe distancing. Please note that no children are to come in to the school via the office as we need to keep children in 'bubbles' to minimise contamination.

How would the physical environment at school change to adhere to safe distancing and new hygiene guidelines?

The physical environment in school is already undergoing some changes. The guidance regarding safe distancing in schools is very different to public guidance. In a primary phased school it is recognised that safe distancing is not practical or, in most cases, possible. Pupils will be encouraged to remain at a distance from their peers and staff but we will not be able to guarantee a safe 2m distance between pupils and do not expect our very young children to be able to manage this either. As a result we will instead be creating safe 'bubbles' within our school that minimise the interactions between different groups of pupils. The staff in each of these groups will remain the same throughout each day and the staff will also not mix with each other or into different groups. Classrooms will look different. We will be minimising the furniture in rooms and classroom layouts will be different to that which we left. This would usually have taken place over the summer. Sitting areas in classrooms will be spaced out 2M apart and pupils will be made to stay sitting in the designated places when they are inside.

How have you organised key worker groups?

At present, we have a group with Year 2 and 3 pupils, a group with Year 4 and 6 pupils and a group with Year 5 and 6 pupils.

The school has always been open for key worker children, how will their provision differ?

Phase 1 provision will be different to the previous critical childcare provision. Pupils will only be able to stay in their allocated room with their allocated staff. They will not have use of the hall or computing suite and will be expected to sit and work from their designated sitting area. In addition, parents will not have the option of dropping off or collecting at different times – they will have to stick to their allocated times.

How would break times work? Would snacks and lunch be provided as before?

Break times will be staggered with each group allocated a particular play space. Pupils will be asked to bring their own snack to school. Pupils will have the option of bringing in their own packed lunch or having a school packed lunch (we will only be offering a cheese sandwich option).

Can children bring in toys?

No, this will increase contamination. Children will only be allowed a water bottle, snack and packed lunch in their bag.

Will there be daily checks on staff and children for high temps?

No, checking of temperatures will not take place in school. All families will be expected to monitor themselves closely and report any symptoms of Coronavirus to the school as soon as possible.

How will new rules and guidelines be communicated and enforced amongst children during the school day?

Adaptations to our behaviour policy will need to be made prior to re-opening. This will be communicated to all stakeholders once completed. Behavioural expectations will continue to be followed. We will communicate rules and expectations consistently, positively and regularly with all of our pupils, as we would always do.

If at any time a risk assessment is compromised due to unsafe behaviours, parents will be contacted and a review of attendance and support procedures will be carried in order to best support our pupils, staff and community to remain safe.

What will happen if my child will not go into the building without me?

Due to safe distancing measures, pupils will need to enter the 'bubble' on their own. Children will need to be dropped off at the designated point. If a pupil does not want to leave their parent, it will be the parent's responsibility to take them home.

Why are you offering four days (Monday-Thursday)

We have tried very hard to create a plan that incorporates as many priority pupils being safely in school. In doing this we have had to create bubbles, this means that staff are allocated to a group and will not mix with others. This means that it is not possible to have five days of provision with the 'bubble' principle. In addition, on Friday the school will have a thorough deep clean and the staff will need time to plan learning and prepare resources for home learning and key worker groups.

How will teaching methods change to work around the new guidelines? / What areas of the curriculum will be focused on? / What emotional support will be offered to returning children?

Our priority is safety and well-being of pupils. We are not expecting pupils to return to school and follow their previous teaching timetable. We will be focussing on key skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics. We do not want pupils at home to be at a disadvantage so will provide the same work for pupils who are staying at home.

Will children share resources as before? How will classrooms and equipment be sanitised after use?

No. Children will have individual resources allocated to them which will be cleaned daily after use. Classrooms will be cleaned thoroughly each day. A full risk assessment and increased cleaning checklist will be implemented to support this heightened cleaning expectation.

How will those who choose to keep children at home be supported? / Will the same information and resources be made available to home schoolers so that they are not at a disadvantage? /

As a small school, managing home learning and supporting children in school will be a huge challenge. Home learning activities will continue to be provided on our website in the same format, however this may not be uploaded until 10am due to teachers having a group of children.

Will you continue with all the excellent initiatives on the home learning page?

We will try our best. However, in the next phase when more children are back, this may not be possible.

If my child is a priority group, do I have to send them to school?

No, I will respect any decision that you take. You will not be fined for non-attendance this term. We just ask that you continue to complete the surveys when they are sent out and respect the measures that we have in place.

Can I send my child in part-time rather than full time?

You do not have to bring your child in every day. If you have been accepted a place in Phase 1, you **DO** need to call the office in the morning to inform us if your child is not in. Please note that if your child is in, you **MUST** stick to the drop off and collection times.

Will the school definitely be open from 1st June? Not necessarily. You may have heard Boris Johnson in his briefing say that this is a working plan subject to change based on the 'R' rate of infection. We

are also being inundated with advice documents daily which all need to be considered. Schools were promised 3 weeks to sort plans for reopening and we have been given half this time in reality so it may be that we will need to delay opening if further advice is significantly different to our current working position.

Will you continue with Zoom meetings?

Yes, the teachers plan to organise these each Friday.

I have a child in Nursery/Reception/Year1/Year 6 but also a child in the school in another year group. Will I be able to send them into school? No, the school is only open for children in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 or if you have a child on the Key Worker's register.

How will it work if I have children in different groups?

The staff will be aware of siblings and will be out at the drop off and collection points. Siblings can be dropped off at the earliest designated time of the two groups and collected at the earliest designated time of the two groups.

My child is in a priority group and, I have not been given a place and would like one?

Please contact the office. Do not bring your child to school if they have not been given a place during Phase one.

My child has special needs, what will be done to assist them?

At this time, the government are relaxing expectations for children with an EHCP (see here for details <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>) We need to ensure that safety measures are adhered to and will do everything in our power to help them. All class teachers are skilled in provision for SEND children. Please also refer to Mrs Hobbs' blog on the school website which offers advice and resources.

Why are you only offering cold school dinners?

Doing this means we can avoid the use of the dining room and children moving around the building.

Will Breakfast Club and After School Club be offered at this time?

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer these services as they are difficult to deliver in a social distancing context and DfE advice dictates we suspend them.

What about clubs in general?

We are unable to offer any of our usual clubs at this moment in time.

What will happen to Sports Day, the Summer Fair, Open Evening, Leavers Assembly, etc?

Unfortunately, we are cancelling all events for the remainder of the academic year. We are disappointed by this and know this will be tough on the children but the logistics and advice make these events impossible to host. Should lockdown be completely lifted, it is unlikely that we would be able to move forward due to planning and time constraints.

What steps are you taking to keep staff safe?

Our staff, as you know, are amazing! They are raring to go and have been working extremely hard for phase 1 reopening. The safety of staff is of paramount importance, we know that safe distancing is impossible but will try our best to distance ourselves from the pupils. We will do what is 'reasonable' to manage the risk, the main measures include:

- Staff / pupils to try to maintain 2 Meters from each other as much as is pragmatic;
- Group children to minimise potential contact as far as possible e.g. keep children from same household in the same group;
- Additional touch point cleaning in place;
- All children (and staff) to wash their hands regularly i.e. when coming into school, before going home, before snack / eating / after going to the toilet and at regular intervals throughout day.

We have always had a very strong team rapport amongst all the staff so if future issues do arise, I am confident they can be resolved very quickly.

Will other year groups return to school before the end of term? Boris Johnson has expressed a desire for all year groups to return to school 4 weeks before the commencement of the summer holidays. However, there are a great deal of jigsaw pieces to slot into place before this becomes viable and at this moment in time, we have no idea what this would look like or how this would even be achieved.

Will the school be open during the summer half-term holiday?

No, the school will be closed. The school has still been partially open since the main closure and we have had children in every day, including the Easter holidays.

What if someone develops coronavirus symptoms whilst attending school?

When a pupil or staff member develops coronavirus symptoms, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Where the child, young person or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. We will write to the parents of a bubble group advising them if any children or staff from their group have been sent home.

A staff member has had to support a pupil with symptoms. Should we send them home?

No, if a member of staff has helped someone who was unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves or the child subsequently tests positive. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. The appropriate PPE will be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

What if someone at Gade Valley tests positive for Coronavirus?

Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group, including the staff member supervising, should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms. We are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

How are staff feeling about reopening?

We have missed the children and can't wait to see more of them. There is naturally a sense of worry, concern and reticence amongst staff but the team is also naturally very positive and forward

thinking. We are all united in wanting to reopen school to see the children again – we want this to be as safe as possible and in the ideal world, would have more control over the year groups that we could take back. We are keen to serve and do our bit but would ask that you respect all measures that we have set.

Where can I find further general advice? The following links may be helpful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Apologies for the length of this letter and for my general tone. This is not an ideal situation for anybody and we are desperately trying to do what is best for our school community. If you have any further concerns or questions, please contact the school office.

Take Care and stay safe.

Mr Barron