



MAPLE TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Climbing the branches of success

Hawk Drive, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WA
Tel: (01767) 699806

Email: office@mapletreepriaryschool.com
Web site: www.mapletreepriaryschool.com
Headteacher: Mrs C Bainbridge B Ed Hons
Deputy Head: Miss A Hyde PGCE

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Dear Parent/Carer

Firstly, I want to thank all of you who have engaged with us this week in order for us to start preparations for reopening school after half term. I appreciate that you have had to make decisions very quickly and perhaps without all the facts at hand, which cannot be an easy thing for you.

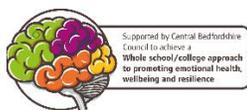
The main concerns that you continue to share with us are over the safety of the children and I want to reassure you that we are also taking the health, safety and wellbeing of our whole school community as a priority.

Yesterday I met with the Governing Body and we spoke, at length, about the risk assessment that we have been carrying out as a school, which aims to identify all potential hazards, enabling us to put measures in place to lessen these risks. We were all in agreement that we are looking forward to bringing some of the children back to us but there were concerns surrounding the speed at which we are trying to implement new procedures. It takes time to embed new routines whilst also being able to facilitate staff training in this.

Taking all of this into account, our conclusion was that we need a little longer in order to make sure that the changes we are implementing are robust and safe for all. We therefore plan to continue to open for children of our critical workers from Monday 1st June and during that week, I will then communicate with you over the start date for your child's year group (Pre-school, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6). We are envisaging this as the week beginning 8th June, but are not ready to set an actual date at this time. We are hopeful that in the coming days there will be announcements made regarding 'Track and Trace' and the effect that the reduction in the intensity of the lockdown has had. This will enable us to confirm a definitive reopening date for the priority year groups.

Ours will involve a staggered and phased approach to allow the children and staff to adapt to new routines and to test the safety measures we are putting in place, to ensure they will hold up as a greater number of children join us. It will also give us a more sensible timeline to allocate groupings of staff and children so that we can ensure that they work with the numbers of staff/classrooms we have. I will stress again though, that we may have to prioritise the year groups we bring back if we do not have enough staff and this will be in age order, from our youngest to our oldest, as advised by the Government.

We are aware that this does not fit with the Government's timeline of Monday June 1st but one of the key indicators for returning to school that they stressed was 'if the science says it is safe to do so'. Your children, and our staff, are precious to us and in order to reduce the risks we will take a careful, measured and responsible approach to opening when 'it is safe for us to do so'.



I would ask that you watch out for communication from me in the week after half term. This will come via Parentmail and Marvellous Me, so if you know of parents without the technology to access either of these then please direct them to call the school office. I will need to spend time with staff looking at names and numbers and sharing key information with them so please bear with us.

In the meantime, to help you prepare for a return to school, or to support you at home, I am going to do my best to answer some of the questions that have been asked this week. Please jump to the group that affects you and your children:

Critical Worker Parents:

If my child is in the critical worker group but is also in one of the prioritised year groups, which group do they go to?

Children in the critical worker group will be the only children who can access before or after school club, in order to keep the bubbles from mixing. If you know that you are likely to need an extended school day for your child, they will need to be in the critical worker group. If you only need us within school day hours then you can decide whether you wish your child to be with critical worker group or their year group but they will not be able to mix and match as we are not mixing groups together. If the child has siblings in the critical worker group, you may decide to keep them together so that they are not playing or mixing with a greater number of children. If your child falls into one of the priority year groups you will be asked for your preference after half term.

Can critical worker children still attend for the full day?

Yes, critical worker children will still be able to attend during normal school hours. Should you need to utilise breakfast or after school club, then you will need to book in with them in same way as usual though you may be asked for the dates that you need in two week blocks so that we can check staff availability and adult to pupil ratios.

Children returning to school in Pre-School, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6:

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

No, uniform will not be necessary this side of September. I am very aware that most of our children will have grown during the school closure and therefore do not expect anyone to purchase new uniform before the start of the new school year. Instead pupils will need to wear comfortable clothing that will support a range of indoor and outdoor activities. They will need sensible footwear, trainers are fine, but no strappy sandals, heels or flip flops and the children need to have their shoulders covered at all times. In regards to safety measures, it is important that children wear clean and fresh clothes each day that they attend school.

Will children be encouraged to maintain hand washing procedures 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 on arrival 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 sink space, as well as designated toilets to reduce the risk of mixing groups throughout the building.

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 after half term.

Can we access wraparound care?

No. Unfortunately, in order to minimise the mixing of groups of children and adults it will only be critical worker children who can attend breakfast club and after school club at the moment. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but we are considering our safety options first and foremost at this time and hope that you understand the reasons for this.

Is there any way we can help in keeping everyone safe?

We will be issuing a new Home/School agreement for children who are returning, which we ask you to discuss with your child(ren) and then sign, including us as a school, to demonstrate the partnership between home and school. Within this document it will establish the huge importance our families play in ensuring the safe re-opening of our school.

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 and play equipment. This is detailed further at the end of this document. Pupils will be asked to bring their own snack to school until we have confirmation that our snack deliveries will be re-instated.

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

Adaptations to our behaviour policy will be made prior to re-opening. This will be communicated to all once it is completed. Behavioural expectations will continue to follow our 'Be Ready, Be Respectful and Be Safe' rules. 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 out in order to best support our pupils, staff and community to remain safe.

Will there be a reduced timetable? Shorter days or shorter weeks?

This will be confirmed after half term. Any decision made will be based on issues that compromise our ability to maintain a safe site for the whole school community.

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 the 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 a recovery curriculum which will address social and emotional aspects alongside the reintroduction of some key skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics. Circle Times will remain a crucial aspect of our school curriculum as well as additional PSHE lessons and outdoor learning opportunities.

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

No. Children, where possible, 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?

Home learning activities will continue to be provided in the same format as now. Staff are looking at ways of balancing the curriculum so that what they are covering in classes can be mirrored, where possible, with those children who are still at home. There will be many challenges in supporting children, both in and out of school. The Government recognises that the quality of home learning may dip because of this but I want to assure you we will endeavour to match this as closely as we can to support you all.

There will be a lot more information coming out after half term to support those children who will be returning to school.

Years 2-5 Parents

**Please can you confirm what is going to be taught to critical worker children in Years 2-5 from June?
How is this going to be replicated for those non critical worker children in years 2-5?**

When we return, our wider phased reopening emphasis will be on transition and well-being activities to support the pupils back into school at what is still a very unsettling time. Not all our pupils will have found lockdown to be a positive experience and will need significant support from us upon their return. We will be spending some time on the relevant curriculum areas, especially English and Maths, but this is not our top priority. We will be using some of the ideas and activities that we have shared with you regarding supporting your children with mental health and will add to our bank of suggestions as these increase so that you also have a more developed tool kit to support from home.

In regards to how the work will be replicated for those children in Years 2-5 at home, it is unlikely it will be. Depending on numbers will depend on how we need to group the critical worker children. As soon as we have mixed year groups/Key Stages within the bubble, the focus of what we can teach will shift, so it

has to be adapted to suit the needs of a much wider range of need and ability. Where key areas or curriculum topics are developed within this group, we will share themes and possible activities you can do with the children in Years 2-5 who will still be learning at home.

It must seem very unfair to so many of you that we can only prioritise a small number of children returning to school, but we are aware of the families who will not be on site and will do what we can with the resources and time that we have to support you.

There will be many more questions to answer after half term but I am hoping that this gives you some of the information regarding our potential next steps at this difficult time.

To end, I want to say how immensely proud I am of our Maple Tree School community - the photos that have been sent in, the work that is coming through Google Classrooms, the positivity that comes across in the phone calls - it all shows how hard you are working at keeping things going. We know your children are safe and well cared for at home and we cannot wait for the day we start to see more children returning to school.

I will be in touch immediately after half term, hopefully with a date for children to return to school, but until then I wish you all a very peaceful half term.

Kind regards

Cath Bainbridge