

Thursday 21st May 2020

Returning to School w/c 1st June 2020 - Reception, Year 1 and Year 6

Dear Parents and Carers

Since the Government made the announcement on Sunday 10th May that children in Year R,1 and 6 could possibly return to school during week commencing the 1st June 2020 we have been working with the Local Authority to prepare to open both of our schools that week.

Acting on the advice provided to schools from the Department for Education we have undertaken a review of how we could achieve this reopening safely and we have shared our detailed plans with our Governing Body. Our plan to reopen both schools for these year groups was authorised by Governors on 19th May 2020. However, advice from the Local Authority and the Department for Education is being updated daily for schools, so our plans will be adjusted when needed, acting on the latest advice to protect your children and of course all of the staff. A final decision regarding the reopening of schools will be made by the Prime Minister on Thursday 28th May 2020.

Attendance

We would like to reiterate to parents and carers that attendance at school will be voluntary, there will be no impact on your child's attendance register if you chose not to send your child back to school during this phased return period. There will also be no fines for non-attendance issued.

To enable us to safely manage the children's return to school you will be sent a booking form relating to the seven weeks of school remaining in this academic year. **Children will only be accepted back into school through the booking process and their return to school will only be accepted on a whole week basis.** This will enable us to plan adult to child ratios effectively whilst maintaining all the regulations set out by the Department for Education.

We recognise that it is difficult to make a decision, not knowing how government advice may change, or what the Prime Minister will announce next week, but we have to ask you to complete the booking form to identify your initial thoughts and allow us to plan to open after half term. If you opt to not return your child to school during week commencing the 1st June 2020, then please do not worry, the form will be reissued each week and you can change your mind at any point across the seven-week period. Please remember that children will only have the opportunity to return to school on Mondays.

School Re Opening

To facilitate our plans to safely reopen both schools to these year groups we are making some changes to the daily opening hours of the school for each year group.

Both schools will be closed on Monday 1st June for staff training and preparation.

Both schools will be closed on Friday afternoons for each of the seven weeks of the half term. Teachers are entitled to planning and preparation time, normally this would happen in school with another teacher taking over the class however, we need to minimise the number of adults in contact with the children and this is the safest way for us to achieve this.

Year Group	Start Time	Finish Time
Year 6	8:40 a.m.	3:20 p.m.
Year 1	8:50 a.m.	3:00 p.m.
Reception	First week 9:00 a.m. Further weeks: 9:00 a.m.	12:30 p.m. 2:50 p.m.

In staggering these start times for our year groups we hope to enable parents to safely drop off and collect their children whilst still maintaining social distancing guidelines.

Please find below a list of questions and answers that I hope will address any concerns you may have about returning your child to school.

Is everyone going to arrive at the school gates at the same time?

We have staggered our start times and liaised with Potton Preschool to ensure that there are the least number of parents on the school site at all times. The whole site will now operate a one-way system, parents and children will enter at the top of the drive (where cars and buses enter the site) near the Caretakers bungalow and queue observing the social distancing markers until they reach the drop off point. All parents and children will exit the school site via the alley in front of the lower school, this will no longer be an entry point for the school site.

Where will I drop my child off?

All children returning to school will be dropped off at the double green gates between the lower and middle schools, to the right of the pre-school building. A member of the Senior Leadership team will then direct your child to cross the line onto the school site and walk to their class line to join their new pod teacher. We would suggest that to minimise numbers of adults on the school site that only one adult drops a child off at school and where possible other siblings/children do not accompany them.

Where will I collect my child at the end of the school day?

Please use the same one-way system across the school site that you will have used in the morning. Do not arrive at the school site earlier than your collection time. Please queue using the designated two metre spacing's down the school drive and collect your child from the senior leadership members at the double green gates between the lower and middle school where you dropped your child off in the morning.

Can my child still bring their bike/scooter to school?

No, Department for Education advice states that no items should move between home and school as this could spread the virus if contaminated.

My child is in Year 6; will the school buses be running?

The Local Authority Transport department have confirmed that school buses **will be** running although they will be maintaining social distancing on the buses. Please communicate with the Local Authority Transport department/coach company re your child's bus route.

How can I communicate with school during this phased reopening?

The school front offices will be closed to visitors; all communication will need to be made via phone or email. Advice or letters will continue to be issued via Parentmail. Teachers will still use Class Dojo to communicate directly with you.

How are classrooms going to operate?

We are going to reduce our class sizes in line with the government guidance, the **maximum number of children in each class will be fifteen**. As many parents may choose not to return their children to school then groups may be smaller than this number. Each 'pod' of fifteen children will have two allocated adults. Those two adults will be the only people to engage with those children in the school day. That 'pod' of children **will not** interact with any other children in school during the school day.

In classrooms, social distancing would be difficult but children will be separated, working individually at tables wherever possible. We are hoping that the lovely weather continues and the children will be able to spend lots of time outside learning with their adults.

Due to the reduction in class sizes your child **may not** be with their class teacher. These adults will stay with their pupils all day, relieving each other for breaks and lunch. Those adults will go outside at playtime and lunchtime with the children in their pod. There will be designated areas on the playgrounds and school fields for each pod of children, they will not mix with any other children or adults in the school. There will be no assemblies or large group events at all during the school day.

How many children will be in a pod?

In line with the Department for education guidance there will a **maximum of fifteen** children in a pod.

Who will teach my child?

As we are required to reduce the class sizes it may not be their class teacher but each group will have a teacher and a teaching assistant.

What will happen at break and lunchtimes?

The adults in your child's pod will stay with their pupils all day, relieving each other for breaks and lunch. Those adults will go outside at playtime and lunchtime with the children in their pod. There will be designated areas on the playgrounds and school fields for each pod of children, they will not mix with any other children or adults in the school. There will be no assemblies or large group events at all during the school day.

Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Office staff at both schools will be maintaining social distancing from each other throughout the school day.

Will my child mix with the Key Worker children attending the Key Worker Care facility?

The children of Key workers attending the care facility will be in a separate area of school and will not mix with any other children or adult groups on the site. Current attendees of the care facility in these year groups will be returning to the school.

If I am a key worker and my child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 can I choose to send my child to the Key worker provision at school rather than them returning to their class?

No, once school re-opens during week commencing 1st June 2020 the Key Worker facility **will not be open to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.** It will only accept children from Year's 2,3,4,5,7 and 8.

Can my child bring a water bottle into school?

New water bottles have been purchased for every child returning to school, these will remain in school. In the new school timetable, time has been allocated throughout the day for these to be washed and refilled.

How will lunch times operate for the children? Where and how will they eat their lunch?

During the summer half term that we will be returning to school we will only serve packed lunches at school, you can book these on line following the normal procedures. These packed lunches will be dropped outside classroom doors at lunch times and the children and adults in the pod will have lunch either in their classroom or outside in their designated space.

Can my child bring their own lunch into school?

Yes, but this will need to be in a disposable bag, no lunch boxes will be allowed in school. Your child will bring their lunch in its carrier bag to their desk and then dispose of the bag once they have eaten the contents. No other child or adult will come in contact with the bag.

Can my child bring their school bag? Will they get new reading books?

No, Department for Education advice states that no items should move between home and school as this could spread the virus if contaminated. Children will obviously read in school with their teacher but books will not be exchanged between home and school.

What if my child needs first aid?

Our teaching assistants are all qualified first aiders and one will be designated to each pod. First aid materials will be available in each classroom. If there is a significant health issue a child would be removed from the pod and taken to the school office to await your arrival.

What if I need to collect my child in an emergency?

Although the school offices **will be closed to parents,** staff are working and therefore they would be able to allow you access to school under these circumstances.

How are you ensuring that possible germs are not spread?

The schools are cleaned daily by both external contractors and our own school Site Agent and cleaner. We will make regular checks with the external contractors to ensure we are notified if any of their workforce contract the virus and could therefore present a risk to our pupils.

Classrooms will be equipped with cleaning materials and surfaces, door handles etc., will be cleaned throughout the school day.

We have built into the revised school day at least six opportunities where the children will be able to wash their hands during the school day. We have also installed hand gel dispensers in the classrooms the children will be using to ensure that they can regularly disinfect their hands.

What will happen if someone adult/child in my child's group contracts the virus?

If this occurs, then following the Department for Education advice the whole pod will be required to self-isolate at home for fourteen days.

Will the children still have PE lessons?

The children will still have PE lessons as this is an important part of the school curriculum. All government advice that we have received recommends that the children spend as much time as possible outside, where the spread of germs is known to be of a lower risk. We will be fully utilising our outside spaces and the children will be allowed to attend school in their PE kit on the days that they are having set PE lessons, this minimises the need for changing. The younger children can often find changing quite a challenge and require a lot of adult support, allowing them to come in dressed for PE means less adult direct contact. For the Year 6 children this means that the children will not need to use the school changing rooms which are large communal areas

Specific questions relating to Year 6

Will the school buses be running?

The Local Authority Transport department have confirmed that school buses **will be** running although they will be maintaining social distancing on the buses. Please communicate with the local authority transport department/coach company re your child's bus route.

Can my child still bring their phone to school?

Obviously we recognise the need for children to have their phones to enable them to communicate with you whilst travelling to or from school and therefore children will be allowed to bring their phones to school. Once in their classroom they will place their phone in an individual plastic wallet to keep it safe. They will then retrieve it at the end of the day, no one else will touch the phone.

Can my child walk to/from school without an adult?

Until the lockdown social distancing rules are amended we would recommend that Year 6 pupils are accompanied to/from school each day. If you feel you will be unable to accompany your child to/from school, then you will need to inform the school office so that we know to release them independently from school at the end of the school day.

I hope that our plans have demonstrated to you that we are taking the social isolating regulations seriously, but we can only take responsibility for the children's safety whilst they are on the school site. Once off the school site their safety is your responsibility, if they are walking to or from school without an adult then how are you going to ensure that they are not walking with friends, mixing with children from other pods?

Our Relationship Policy will be altered to reflect that pupil breaches to social distancing is a breach of the school's Relationship Policy and could result in an exclusion. We recognise that this will be difficult for the children but we would seek parental support in helping your child to understand the rules in the current situation.

I hope that the plans we have outlined for you within this document clearly demonstrate our commitment to keeping your child safe when they return to school, we look forward to welcoming them back on the 2nd June, 2020.

Yours sincerely



Cathy Smart
Executive Headteacher
The Potton Federation