



Christ is the Centre of St Patrick's School, where we live, love and learn together

ST. PATRICK'S R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL
Smith Street, Ryhope, Sunderland, SR2 0RQ
Tel: 0191 5235050

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Dear parents

You will be aware that on 10th May the Prime Minister announced a desire for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to begin to return to school from the 1st June. To assist schools with this they have released a vast array of guidance documents over the past week, many appearing late in the evening and often with contradictory information! The guidance is not clear and therefore we have spent a considerable amount of time unpicking and discussing the various aspects of it, especially with regards to how it relates to us here at St. Patrick's. I would like to inform you of our thinking at this stage and begin to illustrate what school may look like for those children in a position to return.

Our school has been open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic for emergency childcare for those who need it. This childcare provision for Key Worker children will remain unchanged, even as we begin to bring other groups of children back into school.

We have found it very difficult to understand how the guidance for schools varies so greatly to that given to the public. Outside of schools, we are all expected to socially distance; to avoid groups; to only meet with one other person outside and not to mix with other households. Yet in just over a week's time, the Government expects that we open our doors to a larger number of children. They anticipate that we will be able to manage the large number of children and their parents safely on and off our school sites; that we will have created 'bubbles' of smaller groups of children and staff that are not allowed to mix with each other; that we will have rearranged our classrooms and found a way to provide lunches without any 'bubble' groups crossing paths! We are also expected to have cleared away all of our equipment, toys and resources, briefed all staff on the new approaches to health and safety, risk assessed everything we intend to do and considered how we would manage the illness of staff and pupils if it should occur. This has been, and continues to be, a mammoth task and we are working very hard to achieve all of this.

Children are at the very centre of everything that we do here at St. Patricks and we are desperate to have them back at school. However, safety and safeguarding are always our number one priorities and we will not do anything that we think might risk the welfare of our children, their families and our staff. I feel it is really important to make things as clear as I can about what school will look like and feel like for those children returning:

- Children cannot effectively social distance. We will do our best to try to encourage this but with all children, regardless of age, it is virtually impossible!
- The physical limitations of our classrooms mean that we will not be able to operate groups of 15 as suggested by the Government. Our groups will be smaller.
- In Reception your child will be with Miss Imeson and Mrs Tomlin. The Year 1 children will all be together in one classroom - this includes those Year 1 children who were with Miss Imeson this year. They will be working with Miss Sirey and Mrs Dixon. In Year 6, I will not be working with my class. They have been split into 2 'bubbles'. One 'bubble' will be with Miss Smith and the other 'bubble' will be with Mr Hauxwell. Our Key Worker group will be led by Mrs Haley and Mrs Godfrey. Staff will not be permitted to go into other rooms, or work with other children that are not in their group. Pupils will not be able to mix with anyone outside of their group, even at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The classrooms will look very different. All surfaces will have to be cleared to allow for cleaning throughout the day.
- Lunchtime will be staggered so that the children are not all eating or playing outside at the same time. Where possible, the children will be eating their lunch outside. Reception and Year 1 children will be entitled to a free school meal. If your child is in Year 6, they can either bring a packed lunch or have a school meal. We would ask that parents wishing to pay for school meals make their payments online. If you are entitled to free school meals, this will be provided for your child. The school meal that we will be offering will be a packed lunch with one choice of hot item to have with it.
- We will not be able to operate Breakfast or After School Clubs as this would mean different 'bubbles' of children having to mix.
- The usual end of year and summer activities will not take place. This includes Sports Day, assemblies, the Year 6 Production, the Year 6 Leavers' Mass and any other celebrations that were planned. This is so sad as I know that these events mean so much to all of the children.
- Children may see staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if they have to deal with any illness or sickness.
- The curriculum will be very different as group or paired activities can no longer take place, equipment cannot be shared and children will not be able to move freely around the classroom or school. There will be a big focus on the wellbeing and mental health of the children as well as lessons on traditional curriculum subjects.
- Children will not be permitted to bring items e.g. pencil cases from home. They can only bring a coat, packed lunch (if required) and a water bottle. Year 6 children cannot bring mobile phones to school.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but I think it is important that as parents you have the chance to speak with your child about how different school may look and feel if/when they return. I know it will break the heart of many of our staff not to be able to give your child a hug when they return, or even talk with their class as a whole group - I know that as the Year 6 teacher I am going to find this particularly difficult. This is something we all need to be prepared for.

We encourage parents to think and reflect on what is right for your child and your family. If you make the decision not to send your child back to school, please be

reassured that you will not be questioned over your child's attendance. It is completely your decision. The Government have made it clear that usual attendance protocols will not be in effect over the summer term. If you do make the decision to send your child back to school, the values that we have here at St. Patrick's will remain.

Further to this, please be cautious about comparing our approach to the return to school with that of other schools locally and nationally. Each school is unique with regard to the size of its rooms, the layout of the buildings, the availability of its staff and the challenges they face. I am sure some schools will feel confident in carrying out the Government guidance to its fullest whilst others will have to take a different approach that better suits their own context.

The plan of how school will operate, the measures being put into place, which children will be returning and when and what you will need to do when you bring your child to school are also being sent out today.

I feel it is so important to be open and transparent. We will be welcoming Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 on June 1st only if it is deemed safe to do so. The Government will be making their announcement with regards to this on 28th May. We will also be consulting with the Governing Body of St. Patrick's with regards to this situation. It is then that we will contact parents with a definite decision. This decision is about protecting lives, therefore we cannot get it wrong. Please be patient with us - we are desperately trying to avoid rushing into decisions that we will later regret.

Our provision for Key Worker children remains unchanged. This group will form their own 'bubble'. If your child has accessed this provision and is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 they will be returning to their own class groups and will no longer access our childcare service. The Government defined list of Key Workers remains the same, so we do not anticipate this group growing in number over the coming weeks.

I would like to thank you all for your support throughout this challenging time and I hope you can understand that our ambition is to bring our children back to school in a safe and well-planned manner. As always, we will keep all of our decisions under review and make sure you are informed every step of the way.

Please keep checking our Facebook page and website for updates.

I look forward to seeing you all as soon as it is safely possible.

Yours sincerely

J.M. Jobling

Mrs Jobling
Acting Head Teacher

