



Greenway Primary
& Nursery School



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Dear Parents/Carers

Returning to school

Following letters dated 11 and 13 May, we are now in a more informed position to share with you our initial plans at Greenway to support your children possibly returning to school after the Whitsun half term break.

Government 'Return to School' Announcement

As you are aware, on 11 May the Government clarified the statement made by the Prime Minister on Sunday evening that there is an *ambition* that on 1 June primary schools will welcome back all children attending Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and that the remaining year groups, (Years 2, 3, 4 and 5) *might* return so that they can complete a month in school before the summer holidays – this would mean those children starting on 22 June.

The children of keyworkers in all year groups will be able to continue with school provision along with those deemed as vulnerable who include the following:

- those children supported by social care;
- those with safeguarding and welfare needs;
- children on child protection plans;
- 'looked after' young children, young carers;
- disabled children;
- children with Education Health and Care Plans.

The Government has made it clear that re-opening schools is subject to progress in managing the Covid-19 epidemic remaining acceptable ie that the rate of infection is decreasing and that the enabling programmes set out in their Roadmap are operating effectively.

Hertfordshire County Council Press Release

Hertfordshire County Council have issued a helpful statement (click on link below):

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/press-releases/when-can-hertfordshire-school-children-return-to-classrooms.aspx>. Within the statement it is noted that '*.....it may well not be possible for every child in each of these age-groups to return to school full time at this point. This depends on the circumstances of each school, and the extent to which the safety of the school community can be assured.*'

Current Position

We know that you may feel extremely anxious at the prospect of your children returning to school. There is nothing that staff and governors wish more than to have the children back at school and continuing with

their education at the earliest possible opportunity. However, you will understand that in the first instance our **absolute priority** is to ensure, as best we can, that **staff and children are safe in the school environment**.

As mentioned in earlier correspondence this week, we have received a huge amount of advice and guidance from the DfE and the teaching unions. Yesterday we received further extensive guidance from the Local Authority. It is taking time for us and the Senior Leadership Team to assimilate all of this information which has, of course also been discussed fellow Headteacher colleagues.

In broad terms it is envisaged at this stage that there will be three phases of progressive extension of opening as the country moves out of lockdown as follows:

Phase 1 – the initial phase through to partial reopening to some or all year groups by the end of the summer term;

Phase 2 – the second phase when schools are largely open but likely to be educating reduced numbers on site at any one time due to the requirement to social distance so far as is possible;

Phase 3 – the longer term recovery phase when pupils are back at school full time but much ground has to be made up.

It is very clear that at the moment it is impossible to predict when schools will move from phase to phase – this will be a Government decision. The Government will inevitably refer to the five criteria relating to the rate of progression of Covid-19 and the processes available to manage the epidemic when reaching their decisions

All schools need to produce a plan (in consultation with and approved by their governors) to deal with these separate Phases and we are starting to do this (see below). Ultimately the responsibility lies with the Headteacher in consultation with the school's Governing Body to evaluate whether and how it might be safe to expand the number of children attending the school subject to a risk assessment based on our specific circumstances.

It is really very important to note that every school is different. It will not be equally feasible for every school and setting to implement the Government's plans according to the prescribed provisional timetable – this may be due to staffing capacity or environmental/site constraints leading to an inability to guarantee a sufficiently safe environment to pupils and staff. It is possible that some schools might remain closed or closed to some pupil groups where opening is not reasonably practicable or safe.

In primary schools the DfE has been concerned to prioritise the return to school of the younger year groups (Nursery, Reception, Year 1) and Year 6. However, the DfE has listed these year groups in order of priority, *with the youngest children being the highest priority*.

No decisions have yet been taken as to how the school will reopen and for which year groups so far as Greenway is concerned.

Parent Survey

To support with our planning and logistics for a possible return of some year groups on 1 June we would be grateful if you could complete the attached very short survey via <https://forms.gle/8BGWhBhuNw8HeApr5> and submit this as soon as possible but in any event by the end of **Sunday 17 May** You may do this via a laptop or your mobile phone. We all understand that your circumstances may change and would ask that you notify us if they do.

It is vital that we have this information to enable decisions to be made as to how a possible return will be organised.

Will attendance at school be mandatory for pupils in selected year groups?

The Government guidance states that pupils are 'strongly encouraged' to attend. However, this is not the same as attendance being mandatory and the DfE has been clear that parents will not be fined, and schools will not be held to account, for attendance figures during this period.

Steps taken to date

We are immensely grateful to all staff and particularly the Senior Leadership Team for the support that they have given since lockdown but particularly this week when we have had innumerable issues to consider and discuss with guidance that is changing on a daily basis.

Aside from preparing home learning activities and report writing the Senior Leadership Team has, amongst other things, been considering various matters including the following:

- Reviewing and writing risks assessment to support a planned return to school;
- Reviewing staff availability in the coming weeks;
- Reviewing and discussing staff concerns;
- Reviewing the school environment to support social distancing, particularly around school movement and placement of children within classrooms;
- Planning the re-organisation of classrooms where the Government has proposed class sizes limited to 15;
- Reviewing procedures for dropping off and collecting children from school;
- Discussing lunchtime and playtime routines;
- Reviewing cleaning procedures;
- Considering what the 'content' of the day will look like – in the first instance the focus will be on well-being, health and safety, before moving onto a more formal curriculum. It is very clear that any return will be a long way away from 'education as normal' and there will be no immediate return to the national curriculum and there is no expectation on schools that they should do so;
- Balancing the delivery to children returning to school and maintaining home learning tasks for those children remaining at home – the DfE have asked that we use our 'best endeavours' to provide this but there are clear difficulties in year groups where some children may be returning to school.

We realise that this is a long letter and that there is a lot for you to digest. However, we feel that it is very important that as parents you understand the context within which we are operating in making such important decisions for you and your children.

We wish you all a good weekend.

Regards

Katharine Ellwood
Headteacher

Elizabeth O'Reilly
Chair of Governors

