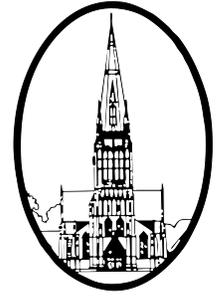


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**Headteacher: Jane O'Brien**



*"St Mary's.... feeding the mind, body and spirit so we can  
be the best we can be."*

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear parents and carers,

I will firstly apologise that there will be no newsletter this week as we continue to plan for future opening.

Last week I said that I would share any plans that we have put in place and this is what I aim to do here.

Firstly, I need to reiterate that this is a changing picture with factors such as government guidance, staffing and resourcing. This means we are very much planning for the unknown, with a plan a, b, c to cover as many eventualities we can predict. Therefore, parents need to take into account, if staff are absent from work, it may be necessary to close some classes or in the case where we feel that safety is compromised, we won't open or would have to close at extremely short notice.

Alongside this we know that the government will be updating everyone at their evening briefing on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May with regards to whether their 5 tests have been met for schools to open. Based on this briefing and what else needs to be done to open safely, we will start to firm up dates that some children can return to school.

So on with the plan.

We have already contacted families of children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 Year 6 and those of vulnerable children and key workers, to be able to estimate numbers returning and outline a proposed plan/date, albeit that is likely to change.

Safety v wellbeing

If it was all about safety, we would all be at home and not leaving the house but we all know, as we move towards some sort of normality, we have to take some



risks. We have used our mission statement and values to guide us through these difficult decisions to balance safety with our children's (and staff's) mental wellbeing.

We are choosing not to open school with a regime where children will be unhappy and lose their love of learning. We are being totally honest with you when we say, that it will be impossible in the younger years and still very challenging with older children to social distance. We feel children's mental wellbeing is important and will continue to 'feed their mind, body and spirit' in the best way we can.

We will of course encourage social distancing and in the classes with older children, they will be seated separately and expected to play apart. Children will remain in a 'bubble'. A 'bubble' will be a group of children and adults that remain together at all times and no one else will join that bubble. This is to reduce the risk of the virus being spread. The government has suggested bubbles of no more than 15. At St Mary's, due to classroom sizes, bubbles will be less. If someone within the bubble gets Covid 19, everyone within the bubble would isolate in line with government guidance. Lunches will be eaten in the classroom; equipment will be limited and everything used will be cleaned. Additional cleaning will take place throughout the day, frequent handwashing will be encouraged, playtimes and where possible toilets will be separate to other 'bubbles' and there will be staggered start and finish times at different entrances.

Our current plan is to be open to half of the class on Monday and Tuesday, closed for deep cleaning on Wednesday and then open to the other half of the class on Thursday and Friday. This will also keep our numbers to a safe level and reduce the risk of transmission. Children will not be allowed to wear PPE and staff will not be wearing it as a general rule, however in some circumstances such as tending to an injured child they would.

Unlike the other children, key worker children will be in school on the days parents have requested because of the varying work patterns and shifts parents have. This group will be in a 'bubble of their own'. These children can return from 2<sup>nd</sup> June by prior arrangement.

You may be thinking, can the school keep my child safe?

Although we will do everything we can, I cannot guarantee that children will be 100% safe. Fortunately, you have a choice to decide whether you want your child to return to school keeping in mind the ethos, procedures and routines that are outlined.

Challenges and changes for you and your child



The school office will be closed and parents will not be able to come into the playground or on the premises. If you need to contact school then please call or email the office and a member of staff will be able to help you.

Parents will have to arrive at school promptly and within a 10-minute window of their drop off / collection time. If you arrive after the gate is closed, your child will not be able to attend school that day. If you are late to collect you will need to call the main office to arrange pick up and fines will apply.

All school lunches have to be paid for on Parent Pay and in advance as normal. If you are providing a packed lunch you must inform school and it must be in line with our 'healthy packed lunch' guidance.

Children should wear school uniform but this should be washed daily as advised in government guidance.

Water fountains and cups will not be available in school, so please provide your child with a water bottle that must be taken home and washed daily.

Home learning will continue for those still at home however this may look different and with a bigger emphasis on Oak Academy resources, as staff will be regularly working in school after the half term break.

#### Grasmere and childcare for key workers and vulnerable pupils

Although I am sure our relationship with Grasmere school will continue, the joint working we have been doing will come to an end today (22<sup>nd</sup> May) as we prepare to welcome those key worker children to St Mary's after half term (2<sup>nd</sup> June). Unfortunately, there will be no provision for these children over the half term break.

Key worker families may know that I initially planned for their children to slot in with their class on some of the days at school. However, this would break the integrity of the 'bubbles' and therefore they will now be in their own bubble.

Please remember that keyworkers need to provide proof of their Keyworker status, days and hours of work before children can return to school, if you haven't done so already.

#### Prayer



There are people in our community that have been affected in many different ways by this horrid virus. Please pray for them, our children and the staff team as we all embark on another strange new chapter in our lives during Covid 19.

We are mindful that you may have your own thoughts about decisions that have been made, but the old adage, "You can't please all of the people, all of the time" will probably never be truer in such complex circumstances. Once final decisions have been made there will be no flexibility to change things like, 'can my child move into this group?'. As the old shop notices used to say: 'Please do not ask [to change groups / times] as refusal often offends'.

Wishing you and your family well at this extremely challenging time and I hope that we will have more clarity with details and exactly when children are returning soon. Take care, stay safe and know that we are missing and praying for you all.

Mrs Jane O'Brien  
Headteacher

