

Greenfields Community Primary School

Information for Parents and Carers to Help Prepare for the Wider Opening of School

Since 23rd March, in line with the scientific advice, school has only been open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

The Prime Minister has now confirmed that we are past the peak of the virus and he has set out a recovery strategy, which includes the phased return of children to school.

At Greenfields, to ensure that safety remains our absolute priority, this phased return to school will be in a way that is measured, reduces risks and is guided by scientific advice.

The latest scientific advice says:

- children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus
- limiting the numbers of children going back to school initially, then gradually increasing numbers, reduces the risk of increasing the rate of transmission
- schools can make changes to how they are organised and put measures in place to reduce risks, including:
 - limiting the amount of contact between different groups of children (smaller class sizes with children and staff spread out more)
 - additional protective measures, such as increased cleaning and encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene

Below are some of the questions raised by parents/carers so far about school reopening:

Can my child return to school?

We will continue to offer places to the vulnerable children and children of critical workers who we have been supporting since the end of March.

From the week commencing 1st June, we will also begin to welcome children back into school, starting with one of the year groups specified by the government (Year 6, Year 1, Reception or Nursery) and gradually increasing numbers to include others from the specified year groups where this is possible. We will send information about this to parents as soon as plans are finalised. Reducing the risks for children and staff is our utmost priority.

Having looked at the size of classrooms and the number of staff who are available for work, we have worked out the maximum number of children who we can safely accommodate in school, bearing in mind Public Health England guidance about 2m social distancing. Limiting numbers within school is absolutely necessary to keep children and staff safe by reducing the risk of potentially spreading the virus and increasing the rate of transmission.

If the current social distancing guidance remains the same, we will not have the capacity to take all the vulnerable children and children of critical workers, plus all children within the groups specified by the government (Year 6, Year 1, Reception or Nursery), therefore we cannot currently make any plans to offer places to other year groups.

What if my child is offered a place back at school but has siblings who are not?

The government has been clear about the year groups that could return to schools from 1 June, limiting the numbers of children going back to school initially and gradually increasing numbers. This does not include siblings in different year groups, unless those siblings are vulnerable children or children of critical workers who are already attending school.

How will risks to children, teachers and families be managed?

To minimise risks to children, staff and their families, we will use a range of protective measures to create safer environments in which the risk of spreading the virus is substantially reduced. The government has recognised that such changes are likely to look different in each school, as they will depend upon individual circumstances.

We will communicate our plans to parents, once we have had a chance to work through them in detail. Approaches will include:

- risk assessing each time we consider allowing more children into school - this assessment will directly address risks associated with coronavirus so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children and staff
- making sure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus
- promoting regular hand washing for 20 seconds with running water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it'
- more in-depth cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, play equipment and toys
- minimising contact through smaller group sizes and changing the layout of classrooms in line with PHE guidance about 2m social distancing.
- reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes - staggered breaks and lunch times plus introducing staggered drop-off and collection times

Do all vulnerable children who are not currently attending have to go back to school now?

We will continue to offer places to vulnerable children of all year groups where it is appropriate for us to do so.

For children who have a social worker, attendance is expected unless their social worker decides that they are at less risk at home or in their placement.

For children who have an education health and care plan (EHCP), attendance is expected where it is determined that their needs cannot be safely met at home.

Should I keep my child at home if they have an underlying health condition or live with someone in a clinically vulnerable group?

Children who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should continue to shield and should not attend.

Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A minority of children will fall into this category and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

Children who live in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should only attend if the child is able to understand and follow stringent social distancing instructions.

Children who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) including those who are pregnant, could attend.

Can children be tested for the virus?

Children will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their household. This will enable children to get back to school if the test proves to be negative.

A positive test will lead to rapid action to protect their classmates and staff in school.

If my child is offered a place back at school, is it compulsory for them to attend?

The government has stated that parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time.

Parents must make the decision about whether they wish to send their children to school. If you do accept the offer of a place, your child will be expected to attend school every day and you should notify school as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware of the reason and can discuss this with you.

Children should not attend if they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions).

What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in my child's school?

If a child develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Other members of their household should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus.

If a child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their group will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. Household members of their group do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with subsequently develops symptoms.

Will education be provided as normal to children who are attending school?

No - schools have the flexibility to provide support and education to children attending school in the way they see fit during this time. The government recognises that schools are best placed to make decisions about how to support and educate their pupils during this period. We will use our best endeavours to support pupils attending as well as those remaining at home through Home/School Learning, making use of the available remote education support. This support will not only be for the curriculum, but also take into account pupils' mental health needs and their readiness for learning.

What will Home/School Learning look like?

From 1st June, Home Learning will become Home/School Learning, because more children may be attending school.

We are currently working on plans to make Home/School Learning more engaging. This could include more opportunities for children to actually see or hear staff online. We cannot deliver 'live' lessons remotely due to safeguarding reasons, but we are looking into other ways to ease the pressure on parents and reassure children about their learning.

How should my child travel to and from their school?

Children and parents are encouraged to walk or cycle where possible and avoid public transport at peak times. The government will shortly publish guidance on how to travel safely, which parents can refer to when planning their travel, particularly if public transport is required.

Will school meals be available for children who are in school?

We will continue to provide meals for all children who are in school.

We will also continue to work with North Tyneside Catering Service to offer meals or food parcels for benefits-related free school meal pupils not attending school.

Will school keep the usual opening hours?

One of the measures to reduce the risk of increasing the rate of transmission will be to make changes to our start and finish times, introducing staggered drop-off and collection times. We will also have to introduce specific processes for drop-off and collection to keep children and families safe.

We are currently working on these processes and once finalised, we will let you know about the new start and finish times, plus drop-off and collection processes alongside any other new arrangements.

Out of Hours provision will be extremely limited due to social distancing requirements, so please do not rely upon this service when making any back to work arrangements.

What transition arrangements will there be this year?

Transition arrangements for all year groups will be online, including giving children the opportunity to remotely see their new teacher and where their class will be in September.

For Year 6 specifically, we will be contacting secondary schools to find out what transition arrangements they can offer. We hope to have this information for parents by half-term.

Many Year 6 children may be worried about missing out on those experiences that mark the end of primary school, such as the Leaver's Performance, Leavers' Tea, signing shirts etc. We are currently working on a plan to make some of these special events happen and will send more information soon. Sadly High Borrans could not go ahead, so any payments already made will be refunded.

Can you guarantee the safety of my children at school?

There can be no guarantees.

We are following all of the guidance available and making sure that our plans are fit for purpose at Greenfields to keep our children and staff safe.

We are risk assessing and reviewing our plans regularly, updating them whenever the guidance changes

If COVID-19 isn't under control by September, do we have to send children back to school?

Schools have received no additional information from the government, so we only know what has been stated so far and that has been about planning for after 1st June.

Will you keep asking us so that we understand the decisions you are making?

Yes - whilst some of the actions we have to take are directives, some of the decisions that we need to take rely upon us knowing your thoughts and plans. This helps us to consider what will work best for everyone.

It is also important that we let you know what is happening every step of the way, but please bear in mind that schools do not receive any prior notice about statements made by the government.