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Dear parents & carers,

We are really looking forward to seeing your child/ren next term. Therefore, I am writing to outline the arrangements for the full reopening of the school from September 2020. When putting together these changes to our normal school systems, I have considered the guidance provided by both the Government and Essex Local Authority.

Attendance

All pupils will be expected to return in September. Parents need to be aware that whilst the Government has allowed children to remain at home since the lockdown began in March without incurring fines/penalty notices, this will no longer be the case from the beginning of the autumn term. Only where a child has to follow clinical and/or public health advice will the absence not be penalised.

I have enclosed a copy of our latest Attendance Policy. Within this, it states that our morning register will be taken between 9:10 am and 9:20 am each morning. This will remain the case in September, despite the staggered start to the school day detailed below. Any child arriving between 9:20 am and 9:30 am will be considered late and this will be recorded in the register accordingly. Any child arriving later than 9:30 am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless they are attending a medical appointment.

Masks

The current Government guidance for September states that they do not expect pupils to wear masks whilst at school. I say current, as you will be well aware that mask wearing is due to become mandatory for shops, so it could change in the future. However, even with the current guidance, children under the age of 12 are not required to wear masks on public transport or in shops once it comes into force for adults.

If you wish for your child to wear a mask during their journey to and from school then they may do so but they will be responsible for removing it on arrival, keeping it safe during the school day and putting it on at the end of school. Staff will not be able to assist a child in wearing a mask, as we will not be able to touch it.

For guidance on how to correctly remove, use and put on a mask, please watch the World Health Organisation video accessed via this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Tv2BVN_WTk

Hadstock Bus

For those children who travel on the Hadstock bus, you are not required to wear a mask, as explained above. We would ask that children either sit in family groups or with pupils from the same class where possible and use the hand sanitiser provided when getting onto and off the bus.



Staggered school start and end of school timings

The Government is advocating that schools have a staggered start and end to the school day where possible. They have also made it clear that schools must continue to offer the same amount of class teaching per day, so a staggered entry must not reduce the length of a school day from September.

Just to remind you, prior to COVID-19, our school start was at 9:10 am and our school finish was at 3:30pm.

When planning these arrangements, I have tried to keep the 2 'bubbles' apart from one another, both in terms of timings at the beginning of the day and collection/drop-off areas within the school grounds.

We have identified 4 families who will have children across both 'bubbles', i.e. they have a child in Class 1 and another child in either Class 2 or 3 in September. If this applies to you, I have explained how your children will enter and leave the school each day.

9:00 am – Class 2 (Year 3 & 4) and Class 3 (Year 5 & 6) will arrive. They must come through the school gate and head straight to their classroom. There will be a member of staff on the gate to monitor that no pupil leaves the school grounds prior to the gate being locked. Parents who also have children for Class 1 (Year R, 1 & 2), i.e. the 4 families mentioned above may wait in the courtyard area. All other parents should not enter the school grounds and should not congregate around the outside of the school. If you need to pass on a message, then please walk around to the front of the school and speak to someone in the school office.

9:10 am – Class 1 will be let into their classroom. Parents may congregate in the courtyard before this time, but we ask that you **do not arrive before 9:05 am**, as we want the Key Stage 2 'bubble' to be inside before you are on our school site.

To collect your children at the end of school the gate will be opened at 3:25 pm. You will be expected to stand in one of 2 zones detailed below to collect your child when the school day finishes at 3:30 pm. If you are one of the 4 families with children in Class 1 and Class 2 or 3, you will need to collect the older sibling after you have collected their brother/sister from Class 1.

Class 1 – You will collect your child at 3:30pm from the courtyard area. Please leave the school site as soon as possible.

Class 2 and 3 – Please walk up to the playground and stand spread out on the playground itself, i.e. don't huddle near staircase. If you have toddlers with you, please do not let them on our outdoor equipment. Class 2 will be dismissed by the teacher near the staircase by their classroom. Class 3 will be dismissed from quiet area section of the playground. Please leave the school site as soon as possible.

The aerial photo on the next page shows the zones for collection. The blue zone is where parents collecting children from Class 2 and 3 should stand. The red zone is where parents collecting from Class 1 should stand.



Handwashing and 'catch it, bin it, kill it'

Since the first UK COVID-19 virus guidance came out for education, we have been ensuring that the children regularly wash their hands.

Continuing on our current arrangements, we will be expecting the children to wash their hands (at minimum):

- On their arrival to school.
- Before they eat a snack.
- Coming in from break time.
- Before lunch time.
- Coming in from lunch time.
- Before they go home.

We have ended our contract with the roller towel supplier. These were previously available in each class and toilet area for drying the children's and adult's hands, but people could unwittingly wipe their hands on part of the roller towel that had been used by a previous user. The children and adults will continue to use the paper towels provided by the school since the lockdown began.

We wish to encourage the children to 'catch it, bin it, kill it' as advocated by the Government. This means, that we will ask the children to use the paper towels and then put them in the bin afterwards. Equally, we will expect children and adults to use tissues when required and to place these in the bin when no longer in use. It would be helpful if each child is able to bring in a small amount of their own tissues to use.

Bubbles

Ideally the Government would like primary schools to have 'bubbles' of 30 children or less. However, when looking into how this would work at our school, it quickly became apparent this would not work at Ashdon during lunchtimes in particular. To facilitate a bubble of 30 pupils or under, we would have to appoint additional staff to manage this and it would really restrict how some activities can run.

I have therefore made the decision for there to be only 2 bubbles. Children in Class 1 (Year R, 1 and 2) will be one 'bubble' and children in Class 2 and Class 3 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6) will be another 'bubble'.

This will mean that the children in Class 2 and 3 can share break time together and lunch time.

Social distancing

The Government guidance states "We recognise that younger children will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group".

Firstly, I must praise all of the children who have attended the school in recent months, as they have been excellent at social distancing, whether it was at 2 metres or more recently at 1 metre, even our very youngest pupils.

In September, the children will not be asked to socially distance within their 'bubble'. Indeed, the Government guidance allows the children to sit next to each other (see below).

Seating

The Government guidance asks that, where possible, the children are to face forwards when sitting at desks and not be face to face or side on. The children may sit next to each other.

When rearranging the classroom furniture before the start of next term, our class teachers will try to get as many of the children facing forwards as possible. Please be aware though, we will have some limitations due to the dimensions of each classroom and the guidance also asks that there is a 2-metre space at the front of the class for the teacher. This will inevitably mean we will have to make some compromises to seat all the children within each classroom.

Break times

The children will have staggered break times during the autumn term. Class 1 will go out to break at 10:30 am until 10:45 am. They will follow this with snack time. Classes 2 and 3 will have their break time between 10:45 am to 11:00 am.

Playground equipment

Unfortunately, we will not be allowing the children to use either the trim trail or outdoor gym equipment for the foreseeable future, as we would be required to clean them in between each group using them.

Lunch times

Our approach to lunch times is different to that of break times. Our younger children already start their lunch 15 minutes earlier than the older children, but in September we will keep these 2 'bubbles' separated. Therefore, Class 1 will eat in their classroom, whilst Class 2 and 3 will eat in the hall. This will also mean that the children in the hall will be able to sit at a desk without facing another person whilst they eat.

Class 1 will then use their outdoor area during lunch and will be supervised by 2 midday assistants, whilst Class 2 and 3 will use the playground and be supervised by another 2 midday assistants.

Each 'bubble' will also be timetabled on a rota basis to use the school field during lunch time, if weather and conditions allow.

Equipment

Your child will be given the equipment they need to complete their work. Much of this will be stored in a plastic wallet that the school is buying for each child. If your child wants to bring in their own resources, e.g. pencil case, then they are welcome to do so.

Generally, we will not be allowing the sharing of equipment and will adapt the tasks we set the children accordingly. However, where it is necessary to do so, we will ensure that any equipment shared is wiped with a disinfectant wipe between different 'bubbles' using it, e.g. laptop computers.

In some cases where it is difficult to clean with a disinfectant wipe, e.g. a tennis ball or reading books, then those pieces of equipment/resources will be taken out of circulation and not be reused for at least 48 hours (72 hours for plastic objects).

Marking

Our predominant method of giving feedback to children is verbally, as we can talk to them instantly. However, teachers and Teaching Assistants will also mark work in books or on worksheets. When written marking needs to take place, staff will keep the book or worksheet out of circulation for at least 48 hours or, when books are used frequently, they will ensure that they thoroughly wash their hands before and after the marking process to reduce the risk of transmission.

Assemblies

The guidance is clear that large gatherings are not allowed where 'bubbles' will mix. Therefore, there will not be any whole-school assemblies in the hall, including our weekly Sharing Assembly.

Instead, we will be trying different methods to conduct assemblies in September. For example, I might lead an assembly to all classes via the Zoom video app or the teachers may lead individual class assemblies.

We still will award our 'Stars of the Week' in each class and the children can still bring in certificates and trophies they have earned outside of school – although these may only be shared with their class, rather than the whole school.

Events

Based on the current guidance, it would not be possible to hold our traditional events, which draw a large audience, during the autumn term. This includes our PTA Christmas Fayre, Open Morning or Christmas Production.

This will clearly be disappointing on many levels, not least, the reduction in the opportunities for the children to experience. We will investigate possible alternatives, e.g. filming the Christmas production, but some things may have to wait to return until 2021.

External coaches/staff working across classes

The guidance for September states that people who can provide a service to schools, may do so across multiple schools, providing they take steps to minimise the risk to themselves and others. Therefore, Owen Paynter of Premier Education, Mrs Clark for music and others, including supply teachers, may work with all groups of children within our school, but also across other schools.

In addition to this, our own staff will be allowed to work across each 'bubble'. This will mean that I can teach each class computing, for example, or a Teaching Assistant can support more than one class.

Swimming

If COVID-19 hadn't intervened, I wanted to change which classes could have the opportunity to go swimming from September onwards. Up to now, only one class could go swimming. This has meant that this class has not had a balanced approach to the PE curriculum coverage, as half of their lessons over 2 years were swimming and they were unable to participate in other aspects of sport, such as dance.

Therefore, I was proposing that Year 3 & 4 swim in the autumn term and the first part of the spring term, up to the February half term. Then Year R, 1 & 2 would swim once a week for the remainder of the year. This would not only achieve a better balance of curriculum coverage mentioned above, it would also allow children to learn to swim from a younger age.

Due to COVID-19, I have taken the decision not go swimming in the first half-term from September. Our school will then review the situation on a half-termly basis and let parents know when we intend to return to swimming lessons.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

Our current arrangements for staff wearing PPE will be in place for September. In summary, the staff are not expected to wear any additional PPE unless dealing with a child who is suspected of having COVID-19.

Cases of COVID-19

As is the case at the moment, any child with symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend school. You should book a test if they are displaying symptoms via the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or via the NHS telephone number 119. If the test returns a negative result, then the child may return to school, as long as they are well enough to do so (they may have another virus, such as flu, so they should stay at home until they are fit and well). If the test is positive, they should isolate for 7 days (unless they still have a high temperature on day 7, in which case they should continue to self-isolate for longer than a week) and family members should isolate for 14 days.

Our procedure for dealing with suspected cases remains largely the same, except the school and the family/families affected are now expected to engage with the Government's Track and Trace system. The Government has also committed to making sure that each school in England is provided with some home testing kits at the beginning of the autumn term, which can be issued to pupils or staff who have developed symptoms at school.

Where we suspect a child may have COVID-19, our procedure will follow the steps outlined below:

- The pupil will be removed from the rest of the 'bubble' and will be put in a room (either the Willow Room or the IT Suite) on their own with a member of staff.
- The member of staff will wear a surgical mask, disposable gloves and gown whilst dealing with the pupil.
- The school office will phone the emergency contact for the pupil and ask them to pick up the pupil immediately.
- The staff member wearing PPE, will remain with the pupil until their parent arrives for collection.
- The staff member wearing PPE will then clean with disinfectant any furniture or resources handled by the pupil.
- The school will inform via email any parents of other children within that 'bubble' that there has been a suspected case of COVID-19. Advise parents that all clothing should be cleaned.
- The school will ask that both the parent and their family members that they live with are tested for COVID-19. Further details at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

- The school will ask any staff member who has worked with the pupil to be tested for COVID-19.
- Our cleaning firm will be informed of the suspected case and on the same day will thoroughly clean the room/s used by the child, in addition to the disinfectant cleaning by the staff member, ahead of the children using the space/s again.
- If the test produces a negative result, then the pupil should return to school when they are well enough to do so.
- If the test produces a positive result, then the pupil should not return to school until after the self-isolation period has been completed (7 days for the pupil and the rest of the household should self-isolate for 14 days) and they show no further symptoms. When a positive case is confirmed, the school has a duty to contact the local health team. The health team will advise the school which pupils and staff must self-isolate, based on who will have come into contact with the child who tested positive. This could mean the whole 'bubble' could be asked to self-isolate.

Where pupils are sent home to self-isolate, the teachers will provide work for them to complete whilst not attending school during term time.

Curriculum

The Government has asked schools to prioritise the mathematics and English that the children will have missed since the beginning of lockdown. However, they also stress that we should try to keep a balanced approach for what we teach the children. Therefore, our staff will try to teach the children as many of the different aspects of the curriculum through our topic and other work, but some content may have to be missed to allow enough time to focus on the key learning in English and mathematics.

Uniforms

I wanted to make parents aware that the Government advice says that, despite the COVID-19 virus, uniforms do not need to be cleaned more than usual, or using a method that is different than usual.

National Assessments

All of the national assessments that were due to take place in the summer term this year were cancelled by the Government. They have confirmed that the phonics check in Year 1, Key Stage 1 tests and teacher assessment, the new Year 4 multiplication tables check and the Year 6 SATs will all take place in 2021.

Yesterday the Government announced that the current Year 1 children, who should have completed the phonics screening check in June 2020, will be asked to complete it as Year 2's in the 2nd half of the autumn term. This will inform the Government as to which children will be asked to retake the check in June 2021.

Children in EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) were due to be the first year to have a statutory participation in the Reception baseline assessment this September. This has been postponed by a year but schools can opt to trial it this September. We have chosen to participate in this trial.

Visits

The Government is allowing schools to undertake educational visits from September 2020, as long as they don't involve overnight stays and/or overseas visits. Fortunately, our residential trip with Year 5 & 6 will take place in the autumn term of 2021.

We will therefore consider carefully any local visits and the measures put in place by the destination venue to minimise COVID-19 transmission. Class 1 will continue to go on 'safari' in the village, as we always have done.



After-school and breakfast clubs

We will be sharing our arrangements for September with Neil O'Sullivan Sports, so that they can base their practice on what we already have in place. Our school office will send out further details to parents once these have been finalised.

Newsletters

Going forward, these will usually be published on a Monday, as I have found it difficult to complete them on a Friday when I have a teaching commitment in Year 5 & 6 all day.

Website

Please note that one of my summer holiday jobs will be to completely redesign the school website. Therefore, if you visit it in the next few weeks you might find it either completely down or with large sections empty. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

Final words

Finally, I would like to again thank families for supporting their children at home since March. I know many approaches have been adopted but any efforts you have made towards your child's education will be helpful and are valued.

I would also like to thank the staff who have put in a great deal of effort and have been very flexible with the ever-changing demands that the last few months have sent our way.

We are losing 3 members of staff at the end of term, with each of them going on to pastures new, as detailed in a previous letter. I would like to thank Mrs Heard, Mrs Miles and Mrs Dott for all of the dedication, skill and expertise they have brought to the school over a number of years – we will miss you all.

Mrs Dott has shared with us some fabulous news – she is expecting her first child and is due January 2021. I am sure you will join me in sending her and her husband our best wishes for when the new arrival joins her household.

We will also be saying goodbye to our Year 6 at the end of this week. They have been a pleasure to teach whilst they have been at our school, so the staff will miss them greatly. As we are unable to hold a leaver's assembly, we have been making some videos that we will be sharing with their parents, to ensure that they have a proper send off. The PTA have kindly donated hoodies too. On behalf of everyone at Ashdon Primary School, I want to wish them every success at Linton Village College and Saffron Walden County High School.

I hope that you and your family have an enjoyable and COVID-free summer break. I look forward to welcoming you all back on September 4th (remember September 2nd and 3rd are PD Days, so are closed to the children).

Yours sincerely,



Simon Rance
Headteacher