



Spalding Parish Church of England Day School

14th May 2020

Dear Parent/carer,

COVID 19 Phased Return to School

I am sure that after the Prime Minister's statement on Sunday, regarding the opening of schools for EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6, that this has raised lots of questions. Over the course of the week, the Government has released further guidance for parents and schools, however we still await further clarification in relation to much of the guidance.

What is the current situation?

At the moment, for us in school, there is no change to the current guidance. We will continue to provide care for those parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response and those that cannot be safely cared for at home. The overall message now, and in the future, is that it is safer to stay at home.

What is the current Government guidance?

The Government have provided their advice, but further clarification of this is still awaited. This means that every school community will interpret it in their own way to suit their own circumstances! We are working with the Trust and also taking the advice of the Local Authority to try and find some clarification and consensus to move forward. Please find the latest guidance by following the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

The current guidance is suggesting that if the government feel it is safe to do so, then the classes of EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 will return to school at the same time after the May Term Break and this will be in addition to our critical worker children. It is also suggested that we have groups of no more than 15 children, although in real terms this is likely to be lower given the sizes of classrooms, with children in groups that then do not mix - the guidance recommends that they stay in the same group with the same adults. The 2 metre social distancing is encouraged although the guidance recognises this is not always possible in a school setting with a range of other measures suggested including staggered start and end of day, regular hand washing and the removal of soft furnishings. As you can imagine, this presents its own issues regarding COVID safety and young children.



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What is the school doing to prepare for this¹?

Over the course of the week so far the Senior Leadership team have started undertaking a thorough risk assessment in preparation for a potential return to school. This risk assessment will include both the views of staff and parents/carers and will be the first step in any subsequent plans for a phased return. These plans will not be finalised or shared publically until we are sure that we have the right plan for Spalding Parish, which follows the government guidelines. However, I do want to share our current thinking with you because we are a school family and I believe that you need all the facts about the direction which the government wants us to take.

With the number of small groups (15 children in a group) that we will need to offer, not all children will be looked after by their own class teacher. Some groups will need to be looked after by teaching assistants or teachers from other Year Groups. It is also very likely that children will not be in their usual classroom or with preferred friendship groups, or following the usual school timetable and structure. We know that this will cause anxiety for some pupils and parents. Despite our very best endeavours, we are not going to be able to offer the known environment which your child left, although we will try our very best because we know your children.

In addition to a phased return, the teachers will also need to continue to offer childcare for critical workers and online learning and support for any pupils not in school including other year groups (Year 2, Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5) not part of this phase of return. This will mean that whilst your children attend school, their learning will be the same as for the children who are learning at home. To clarify, the children who attend school will not necessarily have an advantage of returning early, due to the heavy restrictions we face by welcoming them back.

It is important to us that we gauge your views, as a parent/carer, on the current proposals. If you do have a child in EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 we would ask that you complete the short questionnaire so we can include parent views within our risk assessment. It will also allow us to consider groupings of pupils and staffing numbers once we get to this point.

EYFS - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QVKCK5B>

Year 1 - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Q8Z7L5R>

Year 6 - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QKGTJYQ>

What will happen next?

Please be assured that we will not re-open for the specified year groups until we are 100% prepared and our plans are based on what we as a school community need and want. I anticipate (and hope!) that the guidance may be updated in the next week or so to support a phased return, but until it is, we will endeavour to facilitate a safe return by interpreting the guidance ourselves to suit our school.

Bearing in mind the points above and the official guidance, I want you to know that we miss you and your children, and do want to welcome them back to school as soon as it is safe to do so. We remain committed to helping our school community feel safe and secure as we move forwards; if you as parents decide that the situation in school is too concerning, we will understand your decision to keep your child/ren out of school. We will not fine for non-attendance or let it affect their attendance record.



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The speculation in the press and on social media will now be about how schools can open safely (or whether they should open at all before September), and it will intensify over the next three weeks. As always, at Spalding Parish Church of England Day School, we take the view that we need to consider all of our actions and communications to parents and children carefully, before making decisions. These decisions will always first and foremost take into account the welfare and well-being of staff, pupils and parents in our school. Once the school have made any decisions (following all Government guidelines), we will let you know through our usual channels.

Until then, please do not worry or compare us to other schools – we are unique and will make decisions which suit us as a school community. We will continue to keep contact with you and continue to support each other in these very difficult and uncertain times.

As always, if you need to talk, please do not hesitate to email me – or telephone the school office so a call back can then be rearranged. Together we will get through this difficult period as a family, with the love of God.

Kind Regards,



Diane Mulley
Head Teacher

