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22nd May 2020

RE: Update on proposed phased re-opening of schools

Dear Parents/Carers,

Firstly, apologies for the long letter but we wanted to be clear in our communication. We last wrote to you on 11th May following the Prime Minister's announcement of a potential phased re-opening of schools for Year 6, Year 1 and EYFS on the 1st June. The government has provided **advice** and recommendations regarding organising a gradual re-opening of schools. These arrangements and the timeline of these are guidelines only and schools can make plans based on the schools' circumstances. We have included a link to guidance for parents, which you may find useful: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>.

We write to update you on our planning and preparation for a phased return for the year groups mentioned above. We are sharing the plan with you so you can make an informed decision about sending your child to school following the lockdown period. We would like to thank all parents for completing our survey and this letter is part based on your feedback and questions or concerns that you have raised.

There has been a lot of debate in the media about whether opening schools at this time is the right decision and we understand that all families are wanting the best for their child/ren as do we. We understand that this is potentially a very anxious time for you and your family, thus we want to assure you that we will do all we can to plan as effectively as possible for the safe return of our children and staff. The guidance and advice given to schools and the information shared by the media are contradictory to say the least. Every school both locally and nationally will have different ways of approaching the proposed re-opening of schools. Our plan will be different to local schools in the area and nationally and we are asking parents to work with the school and adhere to the plan as set out in the letter. It will not be fair or helpful to be comparing different schools facing different challenges during this time.

If as a family you decide not to send your child to school, we will continue to support you in the way that we have over the last 9 weeks. Rest assured that parents will not be fined if they choose not to send their child to school on the 1st June. Please note that children in receipt of **Free School Meal vouchers through Edenred** will not receive these vouchers for the days that your children are attending school. *This will mean that if your child is attending school for 2 days per week you will only receive £9 for that child attending school instead of £15.* We will continue to offer a Healthy Packed lunch for children who are not attending school but parents are reminded that they have to complete the survey which can be found on our school website and will be texted every Friday to place your order for the following week.

Our highest and main priority remains the safety and wellbeing of our children, staff and parents. We have looked at the availability of staff (many staff members are not able to return due to their own vulnerability), The number of children in our school vs the number of classes we have available, the cleaning routines, classroom spaces, lunch time and play time arrangements, survey results from parents and staff, guidance from the Department for Education and Trade Unions to inform this plan. Taking all of the above into account, we will only gradually increase the number of children returning to school but will not re-open for year 6, Year 1, Reception and Nursery classes at the same time on the 1st June as suggested by the Prime Minister.

THE RPS PLAN

We have taken the decision to start welcoming back **Year 1** children in the week beginning 1st June **only**. This is to ensure we are able to establish new routines and reintegration into school before moving to opening for the other year groups. We propose that:

- **Year 6:** start back the week beginning 8th June
- **Nursery and Reception:** start back the week beginning 15th June (We will update families of Nursery and Reception parents with specific details about their child's return to school before they are due to start.)
- We will continue to ensure that children of critical workers and vulnerable children currently in school will continue to attend and will provide further updates to those families directly.
- We are aware that some children may have siblings who are not in the year groups being integrated back into school. Unfortunately, we will not be able to accommodate siblings during this first phase.
- We will inform parents of children in year 2 to 5 of the next phase as soon as we receive further guidance.

Children returning to school will typically be in groups of **8-12 children with a maximum of no more than 15 children** and classes will be divided into two/three groups depending on numbers that are returning. Each group will attend for two days per week initially. This allows the school to do a detailed deep clean on Wednesday and at the end of the week with routine cleaning occurring during and at the end of each day. All teachers will have planning and preparation time on the Wednesday removing the need to have a cover teacher.

We will try our best but, we cannot guarantee that children will be in their friendship groups, classmates or even with their class teacher and we ask parents to help prepare children for this. Children will remain in these groups called (bubbles) during the two days they are in school. They will learn, eat and play together and not mix with other bubbles, as advised by the DfE, to minimise contact and the risk of potential infection. We will keep this under constant review taking into account government directives.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP TIMES

Year 1 and Year 6 children will access the school via the playground. Parents are required to leave their children at the school gates, and adhere to social distancing outside of school at all times. We strongly discourage any gathering outside of the school. As per the DFE guidelines and the school's risk assessment we are requesting that only **1 parent** to bring and /or collect children from school. If you have a prearranged appointment in school, we ask that you leave the school premises quickly.

School gates will be open:

9:00am- 9:15 am for year 1 children Register to be taken at 9:15 am

8:45 am to 9am for year 6 children Register to be taken at 9 am

On entry to the playground children will travel straight to their classroom and will enter and wash their hands. There will be staff in the playground to supervise children.

Exit from school

Year 1 parents should collect their children at 3:30 pm. Each bubble will be brought to the school gates to be dismissed. Parents must immediately leave the school playground.

Year 6 children will be released from class at 3:15 pm - Parents collecting children must remain at the school gate and wait for children.

We request that year 1, Reception and Nursery parents send their children into school wearing **velcro shoes**, so that staff do not have to frequently tie shoelaces. We will relax the rules regarding the colour of shoes to enable this to happen for the rest of the summer term.

We have provided parents with additional information with clear headings attached to this letter which will hopefully answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please let us know if you need any further information regarding the potential phased return and the school's plan to accommodate this in the safest possible way. You can email me directly at lichristiansen@rotherhithe.southwark.sch.uk Although we cannot guarantee that our plan is completely without risk, parents can be assured that we have taken considered measures to minimise the spread of the virus in our school. We are asking parents to support the decisions we take even if it does not completely meet your family needs at this time.

We will be sharing a 'preparation' video which will be available on the school website from the 28th of May to help families prepare children for their phased return to school.

Please join me in thanking all our staff for the huge commitment they have shown thus far to our pupils and their families during these unprecedented times. They have really been a credit to our school.

Also, a big **Thank You** to those parents and families who have shown great support to the school by their kind words of encouragement, gratitude, generosity and compliments. We look forward to your continued support in the coming weeks.

Please take care and stay safe.

Yours sincerely,
Galiema Amien-Cloete
Executive Head Teacher

Lisa Christiansen
Head of School

SOCIAL DISTANCING

We understand the need for social distancing and as a school we take this very seriously. However, we want to be clear that we cannot give parents 100% assurance that this will always be the case when working with children. The measures that we have taken thus far to promote social distancing are:

- Children to be organised into groups often referred to as ‘bubbles’ – (15 children maximum).
- No mixing with other year groups or bubbles.
- One group to move around the school at a time
- Markings on the playground, hall and around the school to remind children about distance.
- Staggered start and end to the day.
- Desks will be set apart.
- All children will have an individual stationery pack and set of resources that they use throughout the day for the days that they are in.
- Toilets: will be cleaned throughout the day by our cleaning contractor. Toilets will become unisex so that each bubble uses only 1 set of classroom toilets minimising social contact.
- Timetabled outdoor activity/lessons/exercise
- Doors and windows will be kept open as far as possible to increase ventilation.

HYGIENE

- Cleaning company to clean daily and to deep clean weekly.
- Touch points cleaned regularly throughout the day.
- Additional soap and sanitiser dispensers around the school.
- Paper towels to be available.
- Washing hands: on arrival, departure and before and after eating and going outside
- Children to be supervised to ensure handwashing regime is thorough.
- PE equipment to be sanitised before and after use.
- Soft furnishings removed where practical to do so.
- Equipment wiped down during the day. Only toys that can be washed and sanitised to be provided.
- Tissues in every classroom.
- Staff may wear face masks when providing routine personal care or administering First Aid. (Children are **not** required to wear a face mask in school.)
- We will provide lessons and training for children regarding the above.
- For hygiene purposes Year 6 children will not be permitted to bring mobile phones to school.

PLAYTIME AND LUNCHES

- Tables spaced to maximum social distancing possible (2m cannot be guaranteed)
- Children will sit and eat in the lunch hall in their bubbles. Lunch time will be staggered for children. Some bubbles may have their lunch / packed lunch within their classroom.
- There is a one way system in and out of the dining halls.
- Bubbles to remain with the same adult where practicable.
- Equipment with smooth surfaces to be disinfected.
- Markings to keep groups apart and staggered outdoor break time
- Children should bring in their own water bottles as the water fountains will be out of use for safety reasons. They will be provided with another bottle of water during lunch time.

LEARNING

- **Adjusted curriculum** for the summer term, no exams and we will not be following the National Curriculum, this follows DFE guidelines.
- **PSHE** – will focus on helping children to understand the change that they have experienced and will include **mindful** activities.
- **PE** – that is distanced -will occur daily
- **EYFS** – the play-based curriculum cannot be followed. Focus will be on increasing independent competence and individual play. Interactive activities will be adult led. Only equipment and toys that can be cleaned daily will be used.
- **Home learning** will continue for those not in school. Using Oak Academy lessons online. **Please note: Due to safeguarding advice from the Local authority and from Trade unions we will not deliver lessons via live online streaming.**

FIRST AID

If parents have administered paracetamol (Calpol) or ibuprofen (neurofen) to a child in the morning, they must inform the school office prior to bringing children into school.

- Paediatric first aider will always be available in school if children are unwell (where possible 1 adult in a bubble to be a first aider).
- Asthma pumps will be stored in the classroom that a bubble occupies. Epi-pens and other medication will continued to be stored in the school office.
- In the event of a child/adult developing Covid-19 symptoms during the school day:
 - Person will be isolated in a ventilated room.
 - Toilet to be nearby and if used by the adult or child will then be out of use for others.
 - First aider caring for the unwell person will wear a mask and gloves.
 - The person's temperature will be taken and noted.
 - Any waste to be disposed in the hazardous waste bins in 2 sealed bags.
 - Parents will be called to collect a child and staff will be sent home.
 - Staff and children over the age of 5 will be asked to have a Covid-19 test and to update the school regarding the results.
 - Where there is a confirmed diagnosis the bubble will be asked to self-isolate in accordance with the following guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

AFTER SCHOOL AND BREAKFAST CLUB

Based on the survey results only 1 year 6 parent and 2 children in year 1 required after school provision. As numbers are low and since children can only attend After School Club or breakfast club in their (bubbles) we will not be facilitating an after-school club during the phased re-opening of the schools.

We will of course continue with After School provision as soon as it is practical and safe to do so.

COMMUNICATION:

- Parents can continue to email the Office or phone the school should they need to communicate with the school.
- Teachers can still be contacted via the year group email as we will facilitate remote learning for those children not attending school.
- If entering the school is necessary parents should do so following our social distancing policy.
- Remote meetings and calls may still happen for some families due to increased working from home within services.

STAFFING

The re-opening of schools under the current COVID -19 guidelines are dependent on adequate staffing. Please note the following:

- If there is no Head Teacher / Assistant Head Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENCO, caretaker or cleaning staff available the school may have to consider closing the school.
- There is a possibility that your child may not have their own class teacher when they return to school.
- When we group children into bubbles their learning may be facilitated by a Teaching Assistant who will be working under the guidance of a teacher if needed.

PACKED LUNCHES

In the interest of safety we are encouraging children to eat school dinners. However, if there are specific dietary requirements or medical conditions and your child must bring a packed lunch we ask that where possible it is provided in a disposable sealed bag.

Other IMPORTANT information:

Please note that children who are symptomatic and displaying signs of Covid-19 or who have a confirmed diagnosis of Covid – 19 within their household should not attend school. The child and household should self-isolate for 14 days. Parents must inform the school if the child was due to attend