**Birch Wood Vale Information**

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware we have taken a careful and gradual approach to having more children on site from June 1st. I know the decision regarding your child returning to school or not, will have been a difficult one and is very personal to each families’ circumstances. We support and understand your choices and understand that many parents will have misgivings and worries about sending their children back. The government has made it clear, that the choice is yours and if you would prefer to continue home-schooling, you will suffer no penalty. To support this decision, we will still provide home learning and contact from your child’s teachers.

We also have a number of children who are required to ‘shield’ as they fall in to the category of ‘[clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-on-protecting-people-most-likely-to-get-unwell-from-coronavirus-shielding-young-peoples-version)’  and must therefore stay at home. If your child or a close family member falls in to this category we will continue to work closely with you to adjust your child’s risk assessment as things develop and improve.

Beginning from June 1st we have aimed to provide some time in school for everyone that has requested it, if the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time (not all students who are returning will do so from this date.) By now you will have received information from your child’s class teacher or tutor about which days your child has in school, **the guidance below provides important information to clarify arrangements and may be slightly different to earlier information.** Our cautious and gradual approach to more students returning will hopefully avoid any changes to the provision on offer after the government brief on May 28th. We will let you know immediately if any advice comes to our attention which changes our plans significantly. We also have significantly less staff available at present due to child care and their own health issues, this means there may be occasions where unfortunately we have to change arrangements, although we will endeavour to avoid this wherever possible.

**Implementing protective measures in school from June 1st**

We have put in place a number of protective measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). In order to provide the safest environment for both children and staff we have kept the numbers of children in school at the same time to a minimum (maximum of 6 in each class). Furthermore, to help support students adjust to the changes in school, staff to student ratios are temporarily higher. This will also allow staff who may be wearing PPE to feel supported and take breaks when they need to.

**Preparing children for school:**

* Children should bring their lunch boxes (if not having school dinners), a water bottle, a sun hat, sun cream (if you wish). These should be brought in a plastic carrier bag.
* School bags, PE kits and toys from home, should **not be brought into school.**
* Any medication taken home before school closed, should also be brought back in.
* Please ensure uniforms/clothes are washed daily and if a clean uniform is not available, home clothes can be worn. Again, clean every day please.

**Arriving to school:**

* If your child arrives at school by local authority transport (bus or taxi) LA transport will advise you of drop off and pick up times.
* If you bring your child to school, please observe the slightly later start time of **9.00am**
* If you bring your child to school by car, please wait in the car until you can see staff at the designated entrances (see below).
* If you are on foot please observe 2 metres distance when waiting, which will be marked on the floor.

**Whilst in school- use of the building:**

Careful consideration has been given to the premises and how they can be best used to keep small, consistent groups of children together throughout the day, and to keep the groups apart from each other. Additionally, the use of communal spaces is to be managed to limit the amount of mixing between groups as much as possible. Staff and students will only use their designated classrooms and not visit other classrooms. Therefore;

* Staff and student groups will remain consistent wherever possible
* Outdoor play areas will be accessed on a rota basis and be sectioned off for specific groups use to avoid students mixing with different groups
* Staff will collect packed lunches for students from the atrium, lunches will be eaten in classrooms
* Student will be diverted from walking on the corridors except if moving to and from specific locations when entering and leaving the building.
* Groups will be taught in one classroom with a single teacher delivering their whole curriculum with work provided by subject teachers.
* We will look to expand opportunities for outdoor learning where appropriate
* Windows will be open where possible to ensure ventilation

**Whilst in school- cleanliness:**

* All soft toys, cushions and blankets have been put away so they are only accessible for staff to use with students. When they are used they will be taken to the laundry for cleaning after each use.
* Any toys or resources that cannot easily be cleaned have been removed.
* Students will be given their own stationary pack where applicable to avoid sharing.
* Seating plans will be used in all classes so that student use consistent spaces to work
* All classrooms are equipped with disposable tissues, antibacterial hand gel, disinfectant wipes and bins with lids.
* Cleaning our hands more often than usual. We have developed routines to help children understand when and how to wash their hands, helping them to understand they should wash them thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or using hand sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
* We will help our children understand good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach and ensuring a good supply of tissues and bins (with lids) throughout the school.
* Surfaces and door handles will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes after each activity
* Bin lids will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes when tissues are disposed of in them and at regular intervals in the day.

**Curriculum**

The curriculum has been adapted to make it appropriate for the current circumstances, the main focus will be on supporting students to be engaged, happy and safe and to support their personal development.

**Departure from School**

* If you collect your child from school, please arrive at the earlier time of **3pm**
* Please observe the 2 metre markers outside the school
* During this period of time we will no longer use home school diaries. However, you can find out about your child’s day at school using tapestry. Please let us know if you require a reminder for login details

Public Health England’s guidance is that routine testing of an individual’s temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus. However, we ask that you are vigilant and if you think your child may be showing any symptoms of coronavirus please keep them off school and follow the self-isolation guidance.

**Responding to a suspected case of coronavirus in school**

If your child begins to show coronavirus symptoms we will contact you and ask you to collect them as soon as possible. Whilst they are waiting to be collected, they will be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff. They will be care for and given plenty of reassurance. Once the child has left the premises we will ensure areas they have been in are disinfected and any PPE and other waste is disposed of safely.

All staff and children who are attending school will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to school and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. If the child or staff member tests positive, parents must notify us immediately. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect other children and staff in school. The rest of the child’s immediate group will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the school, Public Health England’s local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise us on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases, a larger group may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. If we work together and observe the guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole school will not generally be necessary.

In light of the above we ask that parents and carers ensure we have up to date emergency contacts and consider where these may need to change, for example if previous emergency contacts are in a shielded group.

We will do everything we can to help students adjust to these changes, in the meantime if possible please talk to your child about school and why it might be a little different when they come back. Staff are on hand to support with social stories and answer your question as and when they arise. I hope that this letter has given you the information you need to understand what arrangements we have made to enable children to return to us. We are looking forward to welcoming the children back and I hope that you are assured that we have taken all possible steps to ensure safety for all in our setting. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

Rosalind Hopkins

Headteacher