



Dear Parents and Carers

Please excuse the length of this letter, but I want to be entirely open with you all. If you need help understanding this letter, please do contact us.

Following the Prime Minister’s announcement on the 3rd May I had hoped to write to you sooner. It set forth a plan that it is possible that some groups of children may **return to school** no earlier than the 1st June and that those groups would be drawn from Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 initially. This is contingent on the situation nationally improving and the public health arrangements being eased another step. We have not yet received clarity on exactly what that means in terms of R Rate, hospital admissions, etc. We believe there will be an announcement on the 28th May about this.

Since the announcement was made it has been followed up by various bits of guidance from the government– some of which contradicted earlier pieces of information! Leeds City Council have worked on a **risk assessment** template for us, but each new announcement made it obsolete, so we have only recently received their final version. Leeds City Council have also now published a [letter to parents](#) which is attached to this email, and which can be read by following the link.

Obviously, we want the children back in school as soon as that is feasible and safe! We have drafted a plan for partial re-opening from the 1st June which I will share with you below. I must stress, however, that it is only **draft** right now, and may change in response to guidance and instructions from the government, the local authority, our professional associations and unions. We will also keep it under review ourselves and may need to rework our proposals as we try things out and see how they work. I also must bear in mind that some staff and families have received shielding letters. I have discussed this with a core group of our governors and they support this approach but will also be watching national and local decisions carefully with a view to making a **final decision about opening following the announcement on the 28th May.**

You may, like us, have seen some of the pictures of schools trying to set up their environments to reduce infection risks. We are also making preparations, but if it were necessary for school to be set up in such an austere and unfriendly way then we would not be opening on that basis. Our children’s **wellbeing** is paramount and we will not be inviting more children into school if they cannot play and be children. We have also tried to make plans that do not use up the spaces and staff that belong to other year groups as we do not want to prevent further groups being invited into school when that is announced. (The Prime Minister indicated he wanted all primary children back in school for a month before the summer holiday. As this is less than three weeks into half term we do not want to set something up that is quickly unsustainable. Opening to all those year groups full-time would not work given the current advice as it would require at least two classrooms for each class and two sets of staff.) We also want to ensure that **home learning** is still well supported for the year groups at home and that we are still able to staff our group of children who have been coming to school the whole time (i.e. those who have keyworker parents or who are vulnerable/ have EHCPs.)

Group	Main aims in opening to this cohort	Our initial arrangements	Where our arrangements perhaps fall short of guidance and our response
Year 6	For them to have closure before they end primary school. To say goodbye to their friends and adults in school. To have some sort of a leavers’ finale. To practise walking home before they start high school. To spend time on transition activities, including arrangements with high schools (e.g. virtually meeting new staff, etc.) To have a final Sports	The children will use the hall as their classroom and Mr Davies will teach the whole class, with Mrs Hill and Ms Earl. They will have individual tables well spread out using the whole space. We will be teaching them to social distance in their interactions. The hall will be marked into two halves and other staff will be designated to one half or the other to minimise contacts. Each child will have their own stationery and Chrome Book. The windows will be open and they will learn outdoors as much as possible. They will use the field and possibly the football end of the playground as their outdoor space during breaks. To build up their stamina for the school	The guidance would suggest children should be in two separate rooms but we felt it unfair to children to spend their last days of primary school not with their friends or their own teacher. We also know that some children will walk home with neighbours and once they are back at school their social interaction will increase. Therefore, treating them as one cohort

	<p>Day. To finish the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum that is planned for the last half term. To understand and practise (to some extent) social distancing to help them as they navigate the next few months. To support them in learning about good routines around handwashing and hygiene.</p>	<p>day we will start with a shorter induction session and a later start to their school day. We will have slightly shorter days to support them as they get used to this amount of concentration and to account for the activities they might not be able to do so much (e.g. unstructured free time). It may be that they finish before the end of term if we and they have managed to achieve all the goals we have set out. There will be additional handwashing 'stations' indoors and outdoors to avoid congestion in the toilets but they may bring their own sanitiser bottles.</p>	<p>seems more realistic, even though we will aim to organise them in two halves in our school interactions.</p>
Reception	<p>For them to get used to spending time with people outside their family again. (Unlike the older children they are less likely to have stayed in touch by phone or Internet.) To build up their confidence in going to school again and to reconnect with their key adults and a few classmates. For them to build up their attention span and stamina for school learning again. The youngest children are least able to independently access home learning, so we hope to include teaching which gives them ideas of things to do when they are at home. To support them in learning about good routines around handwashing and hygiene.</p>	<p>Children will spend time in their familiar key groups of up to 10 children. They spend time at the start of each day in these groups normally, so they are a familiar peer group with their key adult. We will start with half day sessions for each group during this transition as they get used to a greater number of social interactions again and the routine of school life. We will use the indoor areas and outdoor areas of learning although there will be some modifications (e.g. the cuddly toys will go into hibernation, we will use the equipment that we can most easily clean and we will be outside as much as possible.) We will have different sets of writing materials, etc. for each of the three key groups and swap them between sessions. The keyworker for that group will attend to any intimate care needs (e.g. help with changing). They will spend time learning things that they can take into their play and activities at home, wherever possible. They will use their own outdoor space for breaks. Doors and windows will be open. There will be additional handwashing 'stations' indoors and outdoors to avoid congestion in the toilets.</p>	<p>Miss Coulter will be teaching across the whole cohort, supported by Mrs Atwal and Miss Jones. We felt it was unfair for children and staff for two groups not to have the benefit of the main teacher. We felt it was unfair for two groups to be placed in classrooms that were not the familiar and appropriately resourced Reception Class environment. As children will be using the same physical space and would need supervising by more external adults to enable breaks as the days get longer, it seemed sensible to treat them as one cohort, albeit with far fewer interactions due to the smaller groups.</p>
Year 1	<p>For them to get used to spending time with people outside their family again. (Unlike the older children they are less likely to have stayed in touch by phone or Internet.) To build up their confidence in going to school again and to reconnect with their key adults and some classmates. For them to build up their attention span and stamina for school learning again. The youngest children are least able to independently access home learning, so we hope to include teaching which gives them ideas of things to do when they are at home. To support them in learning about good routines around handwashing and hygiene.</p>	<p>We will divide the class in two (alphabetically by surname. This should make it easier for siblings if we are inducting further year groups whilst Y1 are still in two halves.) Each class will be with one of their usual teachers (Miss Harris or Mrs Hopkins.) They will be in their familiar classroom and outside area. There will be some modifications to their areas (e.g. the cups in the home corner will go into storage, we will use the equipment that we can most easily clean and we will be outside as much as possible). Children will have their own stationery pack and two different sets of resources that will be swapped before the next group comes in, especially if they cannot easily be cleaned. Doors and windows will be open. They will spend time learning things that they can take into their play and activities at home, wherever possible. They will either use their own outdoor space for breaks or the end of the playground with the tyres and the stage. There will be additional handwashing 'stations' indoors and outdoors to avoid congestion in the toilets.</p>	<p>The two 'bubbles' will have their own teacher and the aim is for 1:1 staff for children with SEND to belong to just one bubble. However, for many of our children Miss Strange is their familiar adult and she will be working across the whole week. This helps to ensure parity for the two groups of children and so they will still be one cohort, albeit only with half of the class at a time.</p>

School Club	To enable parents who are key workers critical to the COVID response to work. To fulfil the actions in children's Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs). To keep vulnerable children safe physically, mentally and emotionally.	This group have been in school every day since we closed, including during the Easter holidays. They have used the Community Room and library as their base and have had a mixture of doing their home learning tasks, school-organised activities and free time, usually outside. We have operated this on a rota of school staff to enable them to juggle working from home organising home learning for our children with their own childcare or caring responsibilities. This has also meant children have been more able to see familiar school adults. Children do not typically have to attend all week, but just what is needed by their parents for working or sleeping after night shifts. Until now we have not been asking these children to wear uniform, but as the others return we will be asking them to do that. They use the middle section of the playground primarily and will have staggered break times from the other children using the playground.	The most recent guidance issued in preparation for after half term does not now promote the use of rotas and would indicate that we should be stricter in maintaining distinct bubbles of children. We do not feel this is flexible enough for key working parents, however, nor does it help children feel that School Club is a normal, fun place to be. We intend to keep our current arrangements as they have been working well. Similarly, some children may need to attend School Club in addition to their year group offer. We will allow this and not insist they stay in the School Club group when they know their classmates are in school. As childminders, etc. will be permitted to operate from the 1 st June, we cannot keep our bubbles pure anyway unless we are very heavy-handed with families.
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Draft timetable for the first week of partial re-opening. This is staggered so that we can induct each group and make adjustments as necessary. Reception and Year 1 will receive a text to confirm them which group they are in. Only items in bold are confirmed at this point.

Year 6	Reception Class			Year 1		School Club
All children	Miss Coulter's group	Mrs Atwal's group	Miss Jones' group	Miss Harris' group	Mrs Hopkins' group	All children
Attend on Monday 1st June from 10am until 12:30. (This includes eating lunch.) After that, attend every day from 9 until 2pm	Attend on Wednesday 3 rd June at 9am. Stay until 12:30. This includes eating lunch.	Attend on Thursday 4 th June at 9am. Stay until 12:30. This includes eating lunch.	Attend on Friday 5 th June at 9am. Stay until 12:30. This includes eating lunch.	Attend on Tuesday 2 nd and Wednesday 3 rd June at 8:50am. Stay until 12:30. This includes eating lunch.	Attend on Thursday 4 th and Friday 5 th June at 8:50am. Stay until 12:30. This includes eating lunch.	Attend as usual, booking in each week unless there is a regular booking in place already. Children can attend, as needed, between 8:30am and 5pm. (Most attend normal school days or half days.)
From 8 th June we are likely to continue this pattern, but may extend the length of the school day.	From 8 th June we will build up to longer sessions and possibly full days with a fair split across the week.			From 8 th June we will build up to full days with Miss Harris's group in on Mondays and Tuesdays and Mrs Hopkins' group in on Thursdays and Fridays. We will see if half day sessions are possible on the Wednesday, subject to cleaning, etc.		As above.
N.B. Wednesday 17 th June is already scheduled to be a training day						

To make this work, we need **parents** to spend some time reading these instructions and **preparing for the return to school**. Now is a good time to get children back into good sleep routines, if necessary, and mentioning to them the possibility of returning to school if they are in the year groups above. They may be worried about not having completed enough work during this time, so please reassure them that we will not be cross or checking it all. (They will probably be able to share work they are particularly proud of, but we will not be trying to 'mark' everything they have done!) As a final decision is unlikely to come until the 29th May, following the announcement on the 28th, it is probably wise not to be too definite with children about their return date. Unless it is strongly indicated that we shouldn't do it, however, we will have the induction session for Year 6 on that Monday regardless of whether school will be re-opening that week. It should hopefully give them the chance to think about how we are going to help prepare them for high school, plan their leavers' arrangements and keep them on track with their home learning.

We do not want to cover our lovely school site with scary signs and so we are going to rely on parent **courtesy** and good sense for some of our arrangements. All of us adults need to **model to the children how to behave** with people outside our family and school groups.

Please ensure your child has a **water bottle** that is brought from home and is cleaned and refilled each day. Give **book bags** a good clear out and make sure they don't have anything in them apart from their necessary school materials. For now we will be eating **packed lunches** either outdoors or in the class base. These will be provided for Reception and Year 1. We anticipate that most of Year 6 will want to bring their own, but we will provide them for children in receipt of Free School Meals and anyone else who wants to order a school packed lunch. We may be able to widen our offer to include cooked food as things settle down.

Children will need to wear **school uniform**, but we understand it may need some modifying as parents may wish to wash it more frequently. We know that some children will have had a growth spurt during this time away from school, so we will understand if you do the best you can with substitutions at this point (just please make sure any substitutions are non-exciting school-suitable clothes so it doesn't start a trend!) All children should wear trainers or other shoes that are suitable for playing outside as we will not be having separate PE kits at this point and children will be playing and exercising in their school clothes. (It may be that teachers ask children to come to school in sports clothes on some days, but they will let you know in advance if this is necessary.)

We don't want to stress parents and children out with strict **arrival and collection** times or queues that are bound to go wrong. We are lucky that we have multiple entrances to our site, and so we ask parents (and any other children they have to have with them) to observe the courtesies they would if out and about for a daily walk or shopping. If you arrive at a gate at the same time as another family, please allow them to go ahead of you. We will not be giving out late marks for people who are delayed coming onto site by this! On their induction day Year 6 can enter, one at a time, by the **hall door**. (Most of Year 6 will not need an adult to bring them onto the school site.) Teachers will then explain to them how they will usually come into school. For Reception and Year 1 we ask you to bring them to their **circles** and say goodbye there. Parents, **please stand well back from the circle**. We know you will also be pleased to see your school parent friends, but whatever your own personal attitudes to the risk, please model friendly social distancing with waves and smiles rather than hugs right now! Please do not allow other children to play on the tyres at this point.

We are changing the hours of our **cleaning and caretaking** staff during this period so that they can do regular cleaning throughout the whole school day, disinfecting regularly touched surfaces, etc. and then giving school a good clean each evening and between groups. We will be setting up extra **handwashing stations** inside and outside school so children can wash their hands on arrival, between activities and before going home.

This [document from the government](#) gives advice to families on the current situation and helping to **evaluate the risk** in sending children to school if they live with family members who are extremely clinically vulnerable/shielding. Children who are shielding should not attend, and children in Reception and Year 1 who live with someone with a shielding letter should not attend at this point. All families will have to make their own judgements about the levels of risk and although we are happy to discuss these with you, will respect them entirely. Although we understand 'lockdown' was intended to manage the number of vulnerable patients requiring hospital treatment at the same time, the messages given will have caused a good deal of fear about this particular virus and that will be hard for some families to overcome straight away. The science looks clear that the risk to healthy children from this virus is fairly low. What is not securely established is how readily they pass the virus on to each other and to adults they are in contact with. Adult to adult transmission does seem to be the most common source of infection and also has the greatest risk of severe illness. **I will be entirely frank with**

you and say that, although we will put in place as many measures as we reasonably can, we do not think it is realistic (or desirable) for primary age children to strictly social distance the whole time they are in school and I cannot guarantee that children will not become infected. The document from the government explains that once schools re-open to more children, they and their families will have access to **testing**. It also explains the closures and isolation to be put in place should a member of the cohort be tested positive for COVID-19.

Parents must not send their child to school if they, or any household member is displaying **symptoms** of Corona Virus. These are defined as high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal. We will be sending children home immediately if they display any of these symptoms, so parents must have somebody available to collect their child straight away, if necessary.

School will be closed to children next week during half term to allow for cleaning and preparation. I will also be instructing as many staff as possible to have a break as they have been working every day since we 'closed' including over the Easter holidays. At this point Dawn does not feel able to offer **Kidzone** at half term or as wrap around care from the 1st June. School staff will continue, therefore, to offer the longer days to School Club that we have been operating so far, but I am afraid we cannot extend that to children in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 who do not have keyworker parents.

In the meantime, the government instructions to the rest of school remain the same: Children who can be safely cared for at home, should remain there. As requested we are continuing to offer childcare sessions when needed by children of key workers necessary to the COVID-19 response. We are also caring for some vulnerable children, including (but not strictly limited to) children with EHCPs and children with social workers. If parents believe their children fall into one of these two categories they should be asked to be placed on the School Club list and they will be invited to request sessions when they are needed.

We understand this may be frustrating for some parents who are being encouraged to now return to work following the government announcement, as well as for self employed parents who may now be permitted to resume working. We agree that it is tricky to see how this advice on working can be followed without clear guidance on schools, childcare or meeting other family members.

For parents who may need support before talking to their employer, or who are now finding they are in a vulnerable position we can arrange for Jane Hinchliffe to contact them to talk things through and signpost to sources of help.

Please do get in touch with me if you would like to discuss this further. Please rest assured, however, that as soon as instructions are clear and a return to school is safe for more children (and the adults they spend time with) we will contact you with more information. **In the meantime, keeping children 'switched on' and in contact with their teachers and classmates is our priority, so that a return to school when it comes is not too daunting. Please encourage them to do the online register (Y2-Y6) every day and to continue to engage with the tasks set for them.**

Have a good half term break. Well done to everyone at Shire Oak for making 7 weeks of home learning work!

Jane Astrid Devane

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janead@shireoak.leeds.sch.uk PS I look forward to writing a more cheery newsletter soon that celebrates the amazing things our children have been doing at home! In the meantime, please consider supporting former pupil Frank in his quest to climb Mount Everest! (Well - a Mount Everest equivalent of stairs in his house.) <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/franklockdown> and have a look at these screenshots from work shared in my Google Classroom. I love seeing everything that is posted there.

Why not join the Google Classroom library? The code is tznyo2k

