

The Belham Primary School



2 September 2020 – by email

Dear Parents and Carers,

With the last few days of the summer holidays nearly behind us, there is only a week to go before we welcome your children back to school – and we can't wait to see all of our Belhamites return. Parents have done a fabulous job of providing home schooling to their children over the past few months but I'm sure that everyone would agree that being in school is vital for children's education and their wellbeing; time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development and can set them back significantly. We will be doing all that we can to provide support in these areas for pupils, parents and staff - working together as a community.

In this email, I would like to explain what you can expect from us in light of the coronavirus pandemic, and what we will be asking of our parents and carers. As you're likely aware, the government announced before the holidays that schools should fully reopen from the start of the upcoming autumn term. They decided this on the basis of:

- The prevalence of coronavirus decreasing
- The new NHS test and trace system being in place
- More clarity about the measures that need to be in place to create safe environments in schools
- Time out of school being detrimental to children's development
- The low risk to children of becoming severely ill from coronavirus

This means we're planning to open to all of our pupils next week. We're looking forward to welcoming everyone back on **Monday 7th September** and we're working hard to make the school a safe, enjoyable environment.

Attached to this email, you will find all of the information that you need to know about opening arrangements in our **infographic leaflet**. The new term will look a little different but we are taking steps to ensure that everyone feels safe as soon as they come through our gates.

I would also recommend that parents read the government guidance which details all you need to know about schools in the autumn term either here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

or in the slightly more digestible leaflet attached ('**Returning to primary school: what parents need to know**').

Attendance

Attendance will be mandatory in September, as the government expects all pupils to attend school. We'll be recording attendance and following up on any absences.

If your children have been staying at home due to the current shielding guidance, the government paused this guidance on 1 August due to the continued decline in coronavirus transmission rates. That means they should be able to come to school from Monday.

However, if you've received advice from a medical specialist that your children should still remain at home even in September, please let us know and continue to follow that guidance. We'll be offering remote education to these pupils. Please see the addendum to our Attendance Policy on our website for more details.

Safety measures

- To keep our pupils and staff safe on the school premises, we will closely be following government guidance and we'll have the following protective measures in place:
- Staggered starts and finishes to avoid overcrowding at the school gates. Unfortunately we will not be able to store bikes and scooters on the school site but there are public bike storage facilities on Bellenden Road.
- Visitors must be by appointment only and parents will be asked to drop their children off at the gates.
- Parent meetings and Parents' Evening will be conducted virtually this term.
- Any visitors to the school, will be asked to wear a mask in the Reception area in front of the main office.
- Children **should not** wear masks or face coverings in school. The government has stated that the risk of transmission of the virus between children is low and that inappropriate handling of masks could lead to the spread of the virus.
- Pupils should only bring in essential items to school – school bag, PE kit, water bottle, reading book.
- Pupils will be in year group 'bubbles' during the core day and will mix only with children within their bubble during lessons, break times and lunch.
- There will be 'small, consistent groups' in Early Birds/Owls/clubs. Details about Early Birds and Owls arrangements will be sent out in a separate email.
- Increased hygiene measures in place, including increased handwashing; hand sanitiser units at entrances, in classrooms and in corridors; allocated toilet cubicles for year groups; full-time cleaner on site; equipment that children use will be cleaned thoroughly.
- Virtual assemblies that you can access from home too! For now, there will not be any large group gatherings within the school.
- Hot school meals will still be cooked safely in our kitchen. The autumn menu can be found on the website.
- If a pupil develops symptoms at school, they will be isolated and supervised in a designated room. Parents will be asked to collect their child and arrange a coronavirus test immediately.

- If a staff member develops symptoms at school, they will go home and arrange a coronavirus test immediately.

If there's a confirmed case of coronavirus, the school will contact the local health team for further advice. It could be that the child's 'bubble' and any 'close contacts' are asked to self-isolate as per the government's instructions – more detailed information about this is attached to this email.

We currently have no trips planned involving transport; we will keep parents informed should this change.

Our enhanced safety measures are in place to keep everyone safe. The school will communicate the most up-to-date guidance via weekly emails, The Belham Buzz and the '[Covid-19 Information Hub](#)' on our website. Our risk assessment has been updated and will be published on the website and sent to parents before the beginning of term.

Drop off/Pick up information

- School day timings can be found in the attached **infographic leaflet**.
- Year groups will need to arrive and depart from either the Bellenden or Maxted Road gates:

Reception – Maxted Road

Year 1 – drop off Bellenden Road; pick up Maxted Road

Year 2 – Bellenden Road

Year 3 – Bellenden Road

Year 4 – Bellenden Road

Year 5 – Maxted Road

Year 6 – Bellenden Road

- At drop off, parents will be asked to line up at the gates where the markings are. Children will be welcomed onto the site by the senior leadership team and the premises team.
- At pick up, parents will be asked to line up at the gates where the markings are. Classes will be in the playground/outside space at the given time, and your child will meet you at the gate.
- Please come at the allocated time for your child/children's class; as we have a lot of children to dismiss and potentially a lot of parents at the gate, unfortunately we will only be releasing children at the allocated times given to their classes.
- We have tried where possible for siblings to be dropped off and picked up at the same times. Some siblings may have slightly different drop off/pick up times.
- Please wear a mask when you drop off and pick up your child; the member of staff on the gate will potentially have contact with many people at this time.
- Unfortunately children will not be able to re-enter the building if they have forgotten something.
- We would ask that parents depart from the gates swiftly, moving along the road as directed by school staff in order to prevent crowding.
- We will be reviewing this system after a few days and making changes where necessary.

Curriculum

Although there'll need to be some changes to reflect the teaching time that was lost during the lockdown, we'll still be doing our best to provide an ambitious, broad curriculum, with an emphasis on the creative arts.

More details will follow but our current plan is:

- In the coming weeks, we will assess pupils coming back to school to identify their starting points and gaps in their knowledge created over lockdown.
- Lessons may be adapted to ensure that core knowledge is taught across the curriculum, whilst still ensuring that **all** subjects are taught.
- Some pupils may take part in one-to-one or small group catch up sessions.
- We will planning for remote education to take place for those who are unable to come into school, either due to local lockdowns or due to individuals or groups of pupils needing to self-isolate.

Pastoral support

We're aware that the lockdown has been a difficult time for many of us, including our pupils. Please let us know if you think your children might need extra support when returning to school, such as if they feel anxious about coming back or they're experiencing bereavement. You can get in touch with your year group's **phase leader** who will pass this information onto the Inclusion Team. We can then work with your family to make this transition easier. Phase leaders for year groups are: Ally Sprakes (Reception/Year 1), Danae Gardner (Year 2/3) and Kate Gorely (Year 4/5/6).

Our current plans to support your children's wellbeing during this time are:

- There will be an emphasis on activities promoting wellbeing and opportunities for shared talk.
- The Inclusion Team will liaise with staff and parents, and may work with individual children and small groups.

I hope that the measures I have outlined above have given parents a clearer idea about what to expect next week. It really will be wonderful to see all of the children returning and of course, this is the first year that we have Year 6 and a full school!

If you have any questions or concerns about the points we've set out above, please don't hesitate to contact me. We'll continue to keep in touch if there are any updates to our plans or if we need to make changes due to new or updated government advice.

I very much look forward to seeing parents and pupils on Monday.

Best wishes,

Liz Cohen
Head of School