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Tuesday 1st September 2020

Update: - September and Offer for all children

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your family have had a good summer break and that you are looking forward to the return to school for the start of the new academic year. Due to the COVID pandemic, and in-line with government instruction, the majority of children have not attended school buildings since the end of March.

Throughout the national school closures, most of our children have been working hard at home, completing work set by teachers, and I would once again like to say how proud I am of the efforts that were made by children to keep up with their learning during the months of lockdown. This hard work will pay dividends as we return to formal schooling. The reality is though, that remote learning, no matter how well structured it is, is still no substitute for classroom based teaching and learning. We are very excited at the prospect of having the whole school community together for the start of the new academic year. It has been too long, 14 school weeks in fact, since we were all together in the building and we have missed our children greatly.

How will we ensure safety for staff and children?

Over the holidays we have continued our planning for the children's return to school. It goes without saying that the safety of children and staff has been at the forefront of all our plans; please rest assured that we have followed all the latest national and local guidance and we have a thorough and comprehensive Risk Assessment on our website. This Risk Assessment has been quality assured by Health and Safety experts at Tameside Local Authority and they have confirmed that it meets all requirements. Our COVID 19 Committee, made up of staff and Governors, including parent representatives, meet every fortnight to review all the school opening arrangements and this scrutiny will continue through the academic year. Obviously, parent and staff feedback will be used to review the effectiveness of our plans and arrangements.

As it will not be possible to guarantee that children will maintain social distancing in any school, we have put in place a host of changes, in line with the guidance, that will ensure the safety of children and staff. It is important to say that our school will feel very different to how it felt prior to the national closures in March. We have had to carefully consider logistics such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning, classroom layouts, arrival and dismissal from school, lunchtime and breaks and a whole host of other school routines. Children will be working in 'bubbles' and the school day has been slightly changed to allow us to practice social distancing and to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Will the curriculum change?

I am sure that our children will be eager and excited to get back to school routines and I know that we will have their co-operation as we return to some sense of normality. We are looking forward to once again providing them with a full, broad and balanced, ambitious curriculum with challenging and engaging lessons. All subjects will be taught in the same way as before Covid. The biggest difference will be that children will now be sat in pairs as desks are now arranged facing the front of the interactive whiteboard. I know that I can count on children to return to school ready to learn and although there have been many adaptations to

how we work, our high standards and our expectation of impeccable behaviour remain the same and our values of, happiness, honesty, responsibility, respect, believe, aspiring to achieve, have not changed. Now, more than ever, we need to work as a team, we need to support each other by being considerate, well-mannered and supportive so that we can all learn and work in a safe environment.

What is the risk for my child returning to school?

The latest Government advice is very clear that the risk to children in school is extremely low and nothing will have a greater effect on the successful futures of our young people than returning to school. It is therefore vitally important that all children attend school each day. There really is no more time to waste and it is vital that children are in classrooms learning.

It is important however, that children do not attend school if they or a member of their household has any symptoms of COVID-19. In these circumstances, families should make the school aware via telephone call (01457 833102) and then follow the latest health advice.

What time should my child arrive and where should they go?

Before the summer we sent a list of start times and end times of the day for each year group. Please check these very carefully. Unfortunately, the size of our site is complicating the entry points and we completely understand that for siblings this is a challenge. It is important parents understand that the reason we are unable to invite siblings in at different gates is to do with bubble mixing and staffing. Our staffing team will be on the gates at the designated times to offer a friendly smile and to guide the children into school. We believe this will be imperative, especially in the first few weeks. This means there will not be staff available in classrooms to look after siblings who have arrived earlier. Therefore, we request parents make every effort to adhere to the timetable previously sent. However, for those who are really struggling to use the two different gates at the specified times, we have reviewed our plans over the summer and therefore offer that any parents who wish to send siblings together may do so at 9:05am. It is absolutely imperative children enter from the 'bright futures' gate entrance. Mrs Brooks will be there to meet and greet the children. At this time all staff will be in their classrooms so there is no risk of a child being left unattended. In addition, for the few parents who wish to collect their children at the same time the option of 3:20pm is available, again, the gate closest to bright futures will be used. We believe this will help any childminders who are collecting several children at same time. A review of the system will take place at the end of the first full week. Please do not park close to the gate, drive up the drive or use Bright Futures car park when dropping off or collecting your child. This is imperative for the safety of all children and adults.

The school day will now ends at slightly different times for all children. These slight changes allow a longer lunchtime to enable us to stagger the sittings, providing additional cleaning in-between. These arrangements will be reviewed regularly throughout the academic year.

Will the Dojo system still run?

Given the time missed, it is more important than ever that we maintain the highest standards of behaviour in classrooms and around school. We will insist on good learning habits at all times and the Dojo rewards and reminder system, as set out in our behaviour policy, will continue to run every school day. I know that children will continue to strive to do their absolute best and aspire to achieve bronze, silver and gold awards. We plan to continue to work with the school council members in each bubble to collate ideas for prizes.

What about uniform?

Children must attend school each day in full, clean uniform (please see full uniform details on our website), including correct footwear. There can be no exceptions unless on medical grounds. Children **must remove**

any earrings before returning to school. No jewellery is permitted excluding a watch but apple or digital watches (those with telephone or internet connections) are not permitted at all.

Lockers will not be used nor will coat holding areas. For this reason, children can attend school in their PE clothing on the days that they have PE lessons. On such days, children may also wear a black or grey tracksuit (zip up top with pants) or a plain sports sweatshirt or hoodie and jogging bottoms to supplement their PE kit (not instead of their PE kit). It is also very important that all children attend school in a suitable outdoor coat (preferably waterproof) as they may be spending time outside during breaks and lunchtimes.

Will my child be required to wear a face mask?

Government guidance regarding the wearing of face masks in schools was updated late on Tuesday 25th August 2020: There is currently no requirement for children to wear face masks in primary education. It is preferred that children do not wear them in accordance with the guidance. However, should you prefer your child to wear a mask outside at playtime they are permitted to bring them into school; however we request that masks are suitable and not any of the scary character designs as these might worry our younger children.

You are responsible for explaining that your child should not swop masks with peers and should not take them on and off periodically to avoid the spread of germs onto their hands. It is important that these masks are washed regularly. Please note that bandanas and scarves over faces will not be permitted to be worn in school at any time.

The rules regarding the wearing of face coverings on public transport* are unaffected. *We do recommend using an alternative to public transport such as walking and cycling to school if possible.

My child will be cycling to school, is this ok?

If children choose to cycle to school they must wear a cycle helmet. Our cycle rack will be available and children must not touch other equipment. It is advisable that gloves are worn when cycling and to safely lock up their bikes.

Will students be able to access their locker?

Lockers will not be available for use when we reopen the school building; this is due to our very narrow corridors and possible congestion. Children will be asked to put their coats over their chairs in class. This is also the reason why we request that bags are only brought to school on Mondays and Fridays for homework purposes. They should not be needed any other time. We will make the lockers available as soon as it is safe to do so.

Will school lunch still be provided?

The lunchtime menu choices will be limited to Grab and Go food; however we are not able to provide plated meals due to the current restrictions. Parents are encouraged to pay for meals using our online payment system. Children in receipt of free school meals will continue to receive these. Children should also bring their own water bottle with a sports cap top, filled at home, as our water fountains will not be available and a small fully disposable snack. Please ensure you have selected your child's dinner on the School Grid system before 9am each morning. **All equipment needed for the school day will be provided – please do not send in pencil cases into school.**

Will breakfast and after school clubs still be available?

Unfortunately, in the interim we will not be offering our usual breakfast club provision or after school clubs. This is because we are unable to mix bubbles of children. Our bubbles are set up in key stages at the moment.

It will be reviewed as soon as possible into the term and we hope to get an offer up and running after the first few weeks of settling back in.

Can my son/daughter still hand in their mobile phone on arrival?

We strongly encourage children not to bring mobile phones and other such devices into school. Our rules are unchanged and any devices found or heard will be confiscated and parents telephoned to collect them. (Please refer to our behaviour policy online) If children do need to bring a mobile device to school, they are advised to bring this in a zip lock wallet with their name on. The phone must be switched off. This can then be handed in to a member of staff in the morning and collected again at the end of the school day.

How else can I help prepare my child for the start of term?

Please also refer to the letter that I sent you prior to the summer holidays, a copy of which can be found on the website. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact school either 01457 833102 or using our email together@bucktonvale.tameside.sch.uk so that a member of our team can help.

We are all very much looking forward to welcoming children back for a successful and productive academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Brown
Headteacher