



OUR LADY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust A Catholic Academy
Old Hale Way, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 1XT

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Head Teacher: Ciara Nicholson NPQH

20th May 2020

School opening to a wider number of pupils

Dear Parents,

Following the updated government guidance on 14th May, we have had to revise our plan for wider opening of Our Lady School to accommodate Yrs R, 1 and 6 pupils. The current guidance makes it clear that rotas should not be used to reintegrate pupils at this time, and that the key worker children and our youngest children are the priority. The premise of the return is that pupils and staff are grouped into 'bubbles' and the integrity of the bubble is protected as far as possible. The government recognises that socially distancing small children is not possible and that the current situation restricts all pupils' access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

In the information set out below, I have set out our revised position through a series of questions and answers:

Q. My child is a key worker, will their place at school still be protected?

A. Yes. Key worker children will still need to book a place every week but they will be prioritised ahead of other children. We have 27 key worker children in Yrs 2-5 who are eligible to take up a place.

Q. How will the phased return work for Yrs R, 1 and 6?

A. After key workers, the government has asked us to prioritise our **youngest** children. All children are to be grouped in bubbles of no more than 15 and they will be supported by 2 adults throughout the day—not necessarily their own teacher.

Year R children will be taught in Yrs R and 3 classrooms.

Year 1 children will be taught in Yrs 1 and 2 classrooms.

As the return of key worker children, Yr R and 1 children demands 6 of our classrooms, it is not possible to have all of Yr 6 back into school in the same week. The site does not accommodate it. For that reason, Yr 6 will be taught in two separate groups on a week A and week B rota with consistent adults for each bubble.

Q. My child is in Yr R, 1 and 6 and I do not wish for them to return at this time, will they still receive home learning.

A. Yes, home learning will continue to be sent for those pupils.

Q. My child is in Yr 2,3,4 and 5 and I am not a key worker. Will home learning continue for them?

A. Yes, home learning will continue for all year groups.





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Q. How will staff be deployed?

A. Each bubble will have 2 allocated members of staff, in most cases a teacher and a TA, during the teaching day. There will be some additional staff members e.g. an MSA assigned to each bubble. Details of the children and staff allocated to each bubble will be sent in separate communication to Yr R, 1 and 6 parents. Every teacher is involved in actively teaching throughout the day and therefore will not be available to answer home learning queries as they have been doing to date.

Q. How do I best prepare my child to return to school?

A. In an effort to support you and your child as best as possible, please see the powerpoint accompanying this e-mail. Please can every parent spend 20 minutes sharing the content and watching the videos with their child. It is imperative that all children are prepared for the changes they will face when returning to school as it will not be the school day as they remember it. We ask that this powerpoint is shared with **every** year group at this stage.

Links to the videos for convenience are:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKP5Uilpu3E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ2NMD3VWio>

Q. How will drop off and pick up work?

A. The start and end times of the day will be staggered by 45 minutes (15 minutes per class) to allow for drop off and collection and to avoid congregating on the school site. Arrangements for each class will be set out in separate communication.

Q. If the staff are all engaged in live teaching how will they support the children and families at home?

A. On Wednesday the school will only be open to the children of key workers. This will allow staff to plan for and support remote learning.

Q. Which cleaning measures have been put in place to mitigate the risk of contamination?

A. As set out in my previous communication, part of mitigating the risks to the children and adults in school is a **significantly** increased cleaning programme. As part of the time on Wednesday, staff will need to sanitise equipment used in the classrooms. Additional cleaning will also take place at the end of each day by teachers and TAs. The team of external cleaners will deep clean on Wednesdays in school. Each room in school will have a box of wipes and sprays to sanitise any equipment the children use. Play equipment will be limited to each bubble and cleaned daily. Regular handwashing will be imperative! Staff will not mix beyond their bubbles and for this reason we have set up a second staff room and allocated individual desks for adult working to eliminate hot desking. Children should not wear uniform at this time to allow for washing/changing of clothes daily.

Q. How will playtime work?

A. The field has been sectioned off into different areas and each bubble will work within a rota to go outside. Children will be taken out in small groups with an adult from their bubble at break and lunch.





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Q. How will wet playtimes work?

A. As per our usual wet play arrangements the children will be supervised in their classrooms and have access to table top activities. A break outside can be taken when it is dry. We will be able to use the hall for each bubble to have a movement break.

Q. How will lunchtime work?

A. The cook will deliver packed lunches only to the classroom door.

Q. What if my child requires first aid?

A. All staff have received training in first aid and in the first instance will tend to your child in their classroom. Should we have concerns that your child requires additional medical advice, as per our normal arrangements we will call you.

Q. How will a suspected case of COVID be handled?

A. The medical room is now a dedicated isolation room and your child will be sent there. We have PPE available for a staff member assisting a child in this instance. Again, you will be called and parents of the relevant bubble/s will be notified.

Q. How will contact with parents be facilitated?

A. Remotely. To protect those on site we will not be hosting parents or any visitors at this time.

Q. My child has additional needs and I am concerned about their transition back to school, what support will be available?

A. Risk assessments will be carried out for high needs pupils and Mrs Marinho, Mrs Snowball and Miss Davis will meet with families to agree the details of those.

Q. For those not in school, when will they return?

A. The government has advised that within a few weeks a wider return may be possible. If this were to take place, then that would most likely involve some form of rota system.

In summary:

- the children will be allocated a 'bubble' within their year group and taught by 2 adults
- lunchtime and playtimes will operate on a rota basis
- drop off and pick up will be staggered across 45 minutes
- packed lunches will be delivered to the classroom door
- the school will not be open on Wednesday other than to key worker children
- the children should not wear uniform at this time
- detailed arrangements for Yr R, 1, 6 and key worker children will be communicated separately to those year groups

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to you all for your continued understanding throughout this time. Your words of appreciation to those in school have





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been greatly welcomed and it is reassuring to know so many of you appreciate the enormity of the task ahead.

I would also like to thank the staff and governors for their valued input and efforts to bring about considerable adjustments so rapidly. You will appreciate a wider return to school has caused a great deal of anxiety and concern for the teaching profession and it is testament to the staff we have in school that all are willing to engage with the process and carry out their professional duty as part of a national effort. Throughout this time, staff have lost loved ones of their own, and have supported ten of our families who have identified as COVID positive. The staff have worked relentlessly to provide remote learning, in school support for key workers and vulnerable children every day, and even managed to call every family at least once.

In addition, I afford professional respect to all of my colleagues in other schools. Headteachers of all the schools in Hitchin and the Trust Heads have been working closely together to try and find a plan that works for our local communities, whilst recognising that every school is unique and will face different challenges and obstacles in planning their re-opening. It has become very clear through these meetings that no two schools will be the same due to differences in size, location, premises and staff availability. Therefore, I would urge parents not to compare us with other schools who may be offering something different; each Headteacher has to do what is right for their individual setting.

Similarly, every parent will have their own views and opinions on this difficult situation and you may not agree with some of the measures we have put in place; however all I can do is reassure you that I have done the very best I possibly can to consider the needs and safety of ALL children, families and staff, within the many restrictions I have.

As with my last communication, I reiterate the final decision about this will be reliant on scientific tests set out by the government and which will be reviewed on 28th May. The government's roadmap says: ***"It is possible that the dates ... will be delayed if these conditions are not met. Changes will be announced at least 48 hours before coming into effect."***

There is, of course, a great deal more to say about all of this. These plans are subject to advice and direction from the government, Department for Education, Public Health, the Local Authority and the Teaching Unions.

Hopefully my communication will stand for longer than four hours this time!

Very best wishes,

Ciara Nicholson

Headteacher

