



I would like to thank parents/carers for their patience and understanding over recent weeks and, particularly, for keeping your children at home whenever possible to help reduce the spread of this awful virus. I would also like to thank those parents who are critical workers who have been forced to use the childcare provision at school so that they could continue with vital work but have also used it only when they have had to.

Following further discussions with staff and governors I wanted to update you on the latest at Catshill regarding the plans in place for the return of children to our school.

As you will be aware, we are being asked to start allowing **Year 6** children back into school in June. We have asked if it would be possible to welcome back other year groups but we have been told this is not acceptable. We will be looking at Year 8 and partnership working with our two high schools over the next 7 weeks to see what can be facilitated. I know you will want to know what 'schooling' will look like before you send your child back to school or not. I fully understand your concerns; I am a parent too and know how important it is to protect our children in whatever way we can. We received confusing information from the government over the last week, so we are in the process of organising what school will be like for our pupils. If you decide to send your child to school from the suggested year group it will be, due to the current national situation, a very different experience to one that they have experienced before. This is why the government has confirmed that **no parent will be fined** for not sending their children to school due to a desire to keep them safe.

As you all know, we pride ourselves on being a caring and nurturing school and this is going to be difficult to implement with the safety guidance given. School will look very different to our usual Catshill; this makes all the staff feel very sad, but it has to be done this way to keep us all safe! We obviously want the best for our children but we know that the changes we are having to implement in school will be very hard for the children to understand. No longer will teachers be able to hug an upset child, the children will probably not have their own teacher/TA, may not be with their usual groups of friends etc. The social distancing will need explaining to children prior to returning to avoid upset and confusion.

The government have asked schools to review their internal Risk Assessments in order to decide how many children we can accommodate in classrooms with children being kept 2m apart; at Catshill in a school built in 1939, this is likely to be up to a maximum of 10 per class. The government has asked for us to begin a phased return. From the take up from the recent survey sent out, we are able to offer places to pupils that have asked for places but this will be **on a part time basis** (in this way we can keep groups small and minimise the spread of infection). Groups will be allocated a week on an alternating basis (Week A/Week B). This is not negotiable. However, the school will still be open each week for children of key workers **who are working on the COVID-19 response**.

I fully understand your concerns, and although we will do our best to minimise risk, the school will not be as safe as staying at home, **we are unable to make any guarantees**. To minimise the risk we have decided to place children in specific groups (**bubbles**) that they remain with; they will not be allowed to mix with other groups in order to avoid possible transmission of the virus. We also need to do our utmost to ensure that these groups do not come into contact with other groups. This will be achieved through staggered drop-off and collection times, staggered lunch (staying in their classrooms) and break times etc. I must also make it clear at this point, should your child return to school, it is possible that they will not be in a group with their own Class Teacher, TA or their own friends. Life at school will be very different for the children, and you need to prepare them for this.

Should the school re-open (we will communicate this by email when plans have been formulated) on 1st June we will not expect children to wear school uniform. To reduce the risk of transmission, it is recommended that clothes are changed on a regular basis and I doubt that many of you have multiple uniforms that still fit your

children. Sensible shoes need to be worn, but not necessarily school shoes. The children will use the outside spaces each day for PE/exercise so clothes should be suitable for this.

Also, to reduce the possibility of transmission, only one parent should bring or collect children, please discuss routes to school and how you are going to achieve this and maintain social distancing. Once places are allocated, you will be provided with further details by email on Friday 22nd May.

I am sorry that I cannot give you any further information at this point as we are still working through our plan, and how it can be implemented safely in school. As always, I will keep you informed with everything that we are doing. In addition, we will continue to monitor the national picture.

Half Term Break

All of the staff who have been in School each week have a great deal to prepare as we plan to open to a wider group of children after half term. They, as well as the children, also need to have a short break from the wide and varied responsibilities they have had to take on over the last 9 weeks. We are also having contractors on site completing planned works. Thus, the school will be closed to all children for the half term break and no work will be sent home for this period.

In summary:

1. It is not compulsory for your child to attend school – they will **not** be fined;
2. Children are asked to wear their own clothes & sensible shoes
3. School will be very different. No group work, single desks etc as we will try to support social distancing as much as possible, no guarantees can be made
4. Children will be offered part time provision Week A or Week B no negotiation or flexibility
5. They will be placed in a group and will stay in that group all day (playtimes/lunch). There will be no mixing of groups
6. Lunch will be in classrooms (packed lunches for all pupils please, drink & snack)
7. If any child/member of staff shows symptoms the whole group will be asked to self isolate for 14 days, children will be sent home. Please do not consider sending your child to school if they show any symptoms, please call us to advise if this is the case
8. There will be staggered starts; you will need to stick to these times (larger arrival time windows to reduce the likelihood of parental gathering)
9. All aspects of this will be continually monitored, and altered if necessary
10. If children cannot keep to the structure of the day and the safety of pupils and staff is being compromised you will be asked to collect them and they will not be allowed to return
11. Out of school learning will continue to be made available on our website for the days when children are not in school and for pupils whose parents choose to keep them at home

P Essenhigh, Executive Headteacher Catshill Federation of Schools.

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