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School Update: Returning to school

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I hope you are well and that you have enjoyed some of the lovely weather recently. Thank you for continuing to share photographs of all the wonderful things you have been doing and for all the messages to school.

As you know, we are working towards children returning to school in **Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6**. As we are preparing school to make it the best and safest environment for children, I would like to remind you that **school will be closed to all pupils during half term (week beginning 25th May)** - we hope you understand the necessity of this.

Our Reopening Plans

Should the government confirm that it is still safe to start to reopen primary schools from 1 June 2020 we will take a phased approach. We will contact you again to confirm our arrangements once we know the government's intention.

From 1 June at the earliest, we are planning to introduce a **phased return**, which includes children in Year 1, Reception, Nursery and Year 6. Important: please note, we have not set the date for reopening, we will only open on or some time after the 1 June when it is safe for us to do so. We will confirm to you, with as much notice as possible, when the actual first day will commence.

Whole school staff preparation and training:

Prior to reopening for children, we will have two staff training days on Monday 1st June and Tuesday 2nd June. This is to ensure that **all** staff receive training on how to keep your child, themselves and each other safe in school: everything we have planned is to ensure that we can meet the highest standards possible.

Our priority, in line with the government guidance, is children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Following this, we are required to focus on the youngest children (Nursery, Reception, and Year 1). We will then seek to welcome back Year 6 to support them in their transition to the high school.

Who will return first?

If your child is in **Year 1**, they will be the first year group to return to school. Once Year 1 children are settled and secure and we are confident in the new routines and procedures, we will contact parents of children in other classes (Nursery, Reception and Year 6) to provide them with a date when we will be welcoming them back into school. These classes will also be phased back.

How will we make the decision to bring more children back to school?

Your child's safety is at the heart of all decisions we will make and our staffing levels will constantly be under review. Government strategy will also impact on the decision to move to the next phase through its monitoring of the R rate. We will communicate with you as quickly as possible when we have made a decision to welcome back the next year group, giving you as much time to prepare for this as possible.

As with most schools, the decision making is based on :

1. Is there staffing capacity to introduce an increase in cohorts based on government guidance on class sizes?
2. Are we happy with the current operations and logistics of the model as it stands before opening to additional numbers of children?
3. Can all controls and systems be maintained with expanding numbers?

As I stated in previous letters, sadly, but necessarily, things will not be returning to the way that they were. We will strive to continue to offer the best trusting, nurturing, caring and inclusive environment that we possibly can in these challenging circumstances but you must be aware that we have to operate in a very different and significantly restricted way.

Nothing is more important to us than the safety of your child and our staff and we will only open when we are assured that it is reasonably safe to do so. This means that we will only open to more children if we can maintain the safety of all children and staff working to the guidance that the government has set.

Social distancing

To be clear, it is acknowledged that the 2m social distancing that we have all come to know is not something that can be easily achieved in primary schools. We are reviewing and updating our behaviour expectations and putting together information for you to share with your child/children prior to their return.

Hygiene

Before the school closed, we were already promoting regular hand washing and other hygiene practices such as 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. We will continue to focus on these teachings as part of the school day. Classrooms will also have appropriate equipment e.g. lidded bins.

I am sure you can appreciate that the school is trying to run as effectively as possible with a very restricted timescale and ever changing information from the Government. We are trying to do the best to make decisions based on what is right for our school community and communicate as quickly as possible with parents. Thank you for your patience.

Existing arrangements for our vulnerable children and the children of critical workers will continue from 1st June. From 1st June, you will need to apply for a place. If you require a critical worker place an application form is available via request from admin@newton-hill.org.uk. There will be a separate group for Key worker children, which will remain the same.

School will close to all children from Friday lunchtime every week (this time will also be staggered). This is to allow the teaching staff to have their entitled PPA time (planning, preparation and assessment).

Please note: School will remain open on Friday afternoon for our Key worker children if required.

Before and After school provision: Newts

Newts will only be available for our Key Worker children from 8.00am until 4.15pm each day and charges will apply. The demand for the provision will be reviewed.

Please note: If your child/children are in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or 6 and attending Newts they will not be able to be placed with other children in their year group if they are requiring the extended hours. They will remain in the mixed Key Worker group. This would not be able to change once in place. You will have to book a place if you wish to use Newts provision.

Thank you to parents/carers in **Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6** who have let us know if your child/children will be attending or not. Please note that if you did not respond or have responded that your child will not attend, you will need to provide one week's notice should you change your mind.

It has been a difficult time for everyone and now that there are plans to reopen and ease the lockdown, it is imperative that we get this right for our school. Please feel reassured that all staff in school have the best interests of our children in their thoughts and their safety is paramount.

We are looking forward to welcoming you back to Newton Hill. Thank you to parents and carers in your continued support for the school. If we can continue to work together, follow advice, demonstrate respect, courtesy and support for others then we will hopefully soon return to some kind of normality, whatever that may look like. If any parents have any questions please email me at admin@newton-hill.org.uk.

We will provide an update again on Monday 1st June or following any government updates or announcements. Our Year 1 families will also receive further information regarding returning to school.

Our very best wishes to you and your families.

For further information please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Yours sincerely,

C. Wheatley

Mrs C Wheatley – Headteacher