

25th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

School Full Reopening to all pupils - 8th March 2021

We hope you and your family are safe and well. As you will no doubt be aware, we have now had confirmation from the Government that schools will re-open to all pupils on March 8th. We are very much looking forward to welcoming the children back.

We continue to work on return to school planning in order to keep our staff and pupils safe. Since January, we have had arrangements in place to test our staff for COVID-19 twice a week. We will continue with this twice-weekly testing to keep everyone as safe and well as possible. Unlike at secondary schools, there are no plans or requirements for infant or junior school pupils to be tested regularly. Staff working in our Cedar class have had their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and are due to receive their second dose shortly.

Much of the government's guidance on school operations is similar to the autumn term. This said, we understand you will still probably have some questions about returning to school and so we have tried to answer as many as possible in the information below.

Attendance

The government have advised that **school attendance will be mandatory** for all pupils from 8th March. This means the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school.
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

We know some of you may be anxious about your child returning to school. As in the autumn term, you have our full reassurance that we will do all we can to keep the children, your family, and our staff safe using measures such as increased cleaning, staggered starts and finishes, visitors wearing face coverings on site, operating in 'bubble' systems and now, additionally, regular staff COVID-19 testing. Throughout the pandemic, we have been as open and transparent as we can in communicating any news of a positive case with all parents as soon as possible. This has gone alongside working with Public Health England and acting on their advice. This will, of course, continue as we welcome the children back to school.

Self-isolation and shielding

We need to again strongly reiterate that it is **vital** your child **does not attend school** if they:

- **have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had a positive test result**
- **live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact**
- **are a 'close contact' of someone who has COVID-19.**

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‘Close contact’ means anyone who has had **any** of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19):

- face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within 1 metre
- been within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
- travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

We have had occasions in the past where families sent their child to school whilst another member of the household went to get a COVID-19 test. Please do not wait to confirm someone in your household / support bubble has coronavirus before keeping your child off school. **If someone in your household / support bubble has symptoms of COVID-19, your child must not come to school.**

If you have received a letter informing you that your child should not attend school whilst shielding guidance is in place, please let us know as soon as possible. In such cases, we will be in touch with you to discuss how we will offer remote education. Where pupils are not able to attend school because they are following clinical or public health advice related to COVID-19, the absence will not be penalised. Schools are allowed to request a copy of the shielding letter sent to clinically extremely vulnerable children to confirm they are advised not to attend school whilst shielding advice is in place.

Uniform

As in the autumn term, we think it is important that pupils are in school uniform to bring some much-needed normality. Please be reminded that our school uniform shop has a huge range of items available at very low prices. Contact the school office for more information.

On the days your child has P.E., we will continue to ask parents and carers to send their child / children to school wearing their P.E. kit. The P.E. timetable will not have changed from the autumn term, but your child’s teacher will remind them of their P.E. days when they return on 8th March.

In following government guidance, we need to continue to keep classrooms as well ventilated as possible by opening windows. Whilst we really do hope the weather will start to get warmer soon, we strongly recommend you continue to send your child into school with a coat so they can put it on if they start to feel cold in class.

Face Coverings

The continued advice is that children at infant / junior schools **do not need to wear face coverings**. The likelihood is that for young children, wearing a face covering could increase their chance of getting poorly. However, if you would still like your child to wear one despite this, please ensure you have talked them through applying them and wearing them in a way that does not increase their chances of getting poorly.

Pupils wearing face coverings should:

- clean their hands before and after touching them – including to remove or put them on
- not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it
- dispose of temporary face coverings in a ‘black bag’ waste bin (not a recycling bin)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them wash their hands again before heading to / away from their classroom.

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Orchard and Shepherdswell
Academy
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In line with government guidance, we have advised staff to wear face coverings in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors or communal areas). Staff are not required to wear face coverings whilst teaching, though some may choose to do so.

Timings of the Day

These will stay the same as the autumn term. This means we will continue to have a staggered start and finish for different year groups until further notice. The times have been decided in collaboration with Shepherdswell Academy in order to try to allow for parents with children at both schools to be able to go between sites at relevant times, particularly if their child is in Year 3 and / or 4 at Orchard.

Years 3 and 4, along with the children in Cedar class, will start each school day at 08:30 and finish at 15:00. The school gates will open at 08:20 and 14:50.

Years 5 and 6 will start each school day at 08:45 and finish at 15:15.

Dropping off / Collecting Children

Please observe the following rules when dropping off or collecting your children from school:

- **Every visitor on school site must be wearing a face covering.** If you do not wish to wear a face covering, or are medically exempt, please contact the school office and we will arrange for you to safely collect your child without coming on to school site.
- Only **one adult per family** should be on-site.
- Please use the **correct entry and exit gate** for your child's year group. For **Year 4**, this includes a **one-way system**, and you should enter site through the pedestrian gate on Ravensbourne Place and leave school by the gate near Main Reception.
- Adults should **maintain social distancing** between other families **without crowding around classroom doors.**

Families who have recently been abroad and are returning to the UK

If your family are returning to the UK for the full opening of school between now and 8th March, you must follow the quarantine guidance set out at the website <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>.

Breakfast Club, Minibus and School Meals

Breakfast club and the school minibus service will continue to run as they did in the autumn term. School meals will run in the same way also. Please check you have booked meals for the week commencing 8th March before **9am on Thursday 4th March**. Please contact the school office if you need any help booking school meals.

We very much look forward to seeing you on the 8th of March and are glad to be welcoming our pupils back to school. Thank you in advance for supporting us in keeping everyone safe and the school open.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. C. Brown
Headteacher

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