

West Tyne Federation of Schools

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WEST TYNE CHURCH SCHOOLS FEDERATION

SCHOOLS FULLY OPEN FROM SEPTEMBER 2020

Monday 13 July 2020

Dear Parents

HEADLINES

- **Both schools reopen on Wednesday 2 September – with all children**
- **Our plans conform to the regulation and guidance from the Government**
- **Attendance rules return to pre-pandemic style**
- **Safety of children, staff and community is top priority – STAY ALERT**
- **Each school is one “bubble”**
- **Importance of Test-and-Trace if symptoms happen**
- **Measures to make school safe include:**
 - **Transport, arrival and departure plans: school times as before (Northumberland County Council may be in contact with individual parents regarding school transport)**
 - **What children may/may not bring to school**
 - **Loosening rules on school uniform**
 - **How to contact teachers and the school**
- **How we will try to re-introduce children to life and learning in school**
- **We'll need your Statement of Understanding and Agreement emailed to school admin**
- **There are opportunities for you to ask questions about our plans**
- **Curriculum will steadily return to normal**

The Governors are pleased to be able to announce to you our plans for the full reopening of Henshaw and Greenhead CE Primary Schools from the start of next term, Wednesday 2 September. We are thrilled to be able to have everyone back together again, and we thank you for your patience and forbearance during these difficult times. It has been a time of trying to find the best path possible between the widely differing views of whether the schools should be open or closed. We are aware that we have not been able always to satisfy everyone, but we have had to be guided by government regulations and guidance and the needs of all groups which form our school community – children, parents and staff.

Whilst we wanted to let you know our plans as soon as we possibly could, you will be aware that over the next seven weeks the national and local situation could change, and we must be alert to dangers of this virus if it starts to reimpose itself. A further HMG announcement is due in mid-August, and we would, of course, contact you as soon as possible if these plans have to change.

You know that we have been following closely what we have been advised by the government and the most recent directive is a huge document with significant detail of how this full return to schools can be achieved. There are regulations for Early Year settings, and for Secondary Schools, but our plan responds to the guidance for primary schools. At this point we want to record our thanks to Mrs Hutchinson and Mrs Fairless for their incredible hard work in turning words into actions and making our schools safe, happy and effective places of learning again. The school records these actions in a Risk Assessment, which currently runs to over 20 pages. A copy of this is available on request, but this letter is a summary which will govern the way school is for at least the Autumn Term. Please read these carefully. You are asked to respond with a statement of understanding and agreement.

1. This **Risk Assessment** is reviewed weekly – and we recognise that this is even more vital in the new world of “everyone back in school”. You can find a full copy on the school websites
2. **Drills** and practices of new ways of working will be conducted regularly.
3. Until now we have been able to accommodate just a small number of children in “**bubbles**” (same group of children with restricted staff). Whilst we will endeavour to keep groups of children separate as much as possible, and with a limited number of dedicated staff, space does not permit us completely to isolate these bubbles as strictly as before. So Greenhead will be one bubble, and Henshaw another.
4. We will use the Summer holidays fully to **check all the necessary equipment** to ensure children’s safe return. In each school September will also see the opening into full use of one extra classroom – for Y3/4 at Greenhead and for Y5/6 at Henshaw
5. The rules governing “**shielding**” change at the end of this month. We are therefore able to expect all staff to return to work at the start of the new term. In addition we will be welcoming three new teachers to our team.
6. The guidance says: *Children living in a household with someone who is “clinically extremely vulnerable” should only attend school if stringent social distancing can be adhered to*. Whilst we will try and preserve the “1m+” separation rule, we are aware that we are not able to guarantee “stringent social distancing”. We will do the very best we can, but in case of this particular circumstance parents/carers should think very carefully what the best course of action might be.
7. Children will only be allowed to return once a “**Statement of Understanding and Agreement**” has been signed and returned to school. To plan properly we would like these returned by the **end of this term (Thursday 16 July)**.
8. Measures we will take in school, in addition to those already in place since June;
 - a. A robust hand-washing regime throughout the day. Children should arrive having washed hands at home and there will be regular occasion through the day when hands are washed, including just before returning home.
 - b. Children will sit distanced as far apart as we can offer over 1m, and will be in **forward-facing seats** except in Reception (and in KS1 at Greenhead). For younger children there will be appropriate space for their individual activities.
 - c. There will be **hand-sanitising stations** throughout the school including at each classroom doorway (doorways will remain open throughout the day).
 - d. **Lidded bins and tissues** will be provided to deliver the “**Catch it, Bin it, Kill it**” strategy
 - e. **Equipment and all surfaces** will be cleaned regularly: for example, counters used by children in Maths will be massively increased in number so that each class will start each day with sanitised equipment which will be stored separately after each use and sanitised again at the end of the day.
 - f. With our schools’ reliance on transport to schools it is not possible for use to stagger **start and finish times in the day**. The timings of the school day will therefore be common to all children. To make this safe we must insist that parents’ cars act like buses – i.e. drop children and leave immediately in the morning, and wait in cars or socially distanced at the end of the day ready to take children home in strict family groups. Please note and follow the signs on the ground which govern this. Please follow all the signs and markers.

We will be operating out of three doors to reduce large gatherings at the front of school at the start and end of the school day.

- The Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children will access their classrooms via the door on the right-hand side of the building. Staff will park their cars on the road for the first term so that the children have clear access to the door.
- Children in Years 3 and 4 will enter and exit school via the main office entrance
- Children in Years 5 and 6 will enter via the gate into the playground and the back door. The children in Years 5 and 6, once they see an adult at the trim trail, can enter the school yard themselves and go straight into school.

We appreciate that siblings may be in more than one group and parents will have to travel between doors. We ask that you start with your oldest child, drop them off first and then the other child/children in age order. Please be patient with us at this time.

We will open the doors at 8.40am to allow extra time to get the children into school and to aim to reduce congestion.

- g. With the exception of the Newcastle United activities in the second half of the term there will be no after-school clubs.
- h. Wrap-around care (before and after-school) is offered by Henshaw Nursery and at Greenhead School.
- i. In order to maintain health security **parents, volunteers and visitors will not be able to enter the school building.** All communication with staff should be via email, or by phone if email is not appropriate.
- j. We want parents to be aware that **staff will be actively on-duty** with only short breaks throughout the day. All staff will be asked to be off the school site by 4.00pm (or 5pm in the Marking Room) in order that effective cleaning can take place each day.
- k. Children are asked to bring as **few "things"** to school as possible. Lunchboxes, hats, water bottles, coats etc. are fine, but we will restrict books going home. Children will be provided with a small packet of tissues and a pencil case full of essentials that will be labelled with their name and will be kept in school- there is no need to purchase new equipment as they will be using what the school has provided. Please try to fit all "things" in school book bags, or small rucksacks. Equally we have removed all unnecessary things from classrooms, especially soft toys/ furnishings etc.
- l. We have thought long and hard about **school uniform**, wanting to
 - i. help children re-identify as quickly as possible with our school community
 - ii. reduce to the minimum the risk of cross-infection
 - iii. not burden families with increased costsSo we ask you to follow this pattern loosening the regulations in order that children come to school each day in clean, freshly-laundered clothes:
We suggest that hoodies and black joggers can be worn on days when school uniform is not ready to wear. If possible these would be our school outdoor PE clothing, but alternatives of this style are acceptable. On Mondays, the children will be taking part in PE sessions/ NUFC sessions so please can they come to school in a hoodie, white t-shirt, joggers and trainers on this day of the week to avoid changing in school.
This will allow you to ensure that children start each day in clean clothing.
- m. There will be **no whole-school assemblies, educational visits or swimming** during the Autumn term.
- n. Wherever possible we advise pupils/families to walk to and from school as this will maintain good social distancing and keep everyone in the open air as much as possible. School Transport, provided by the County Council, has strict regulation, and providers have taken steps to facilitate social distancing where possible. These regulations will need to be observed strictly as it is not possible to reorganise transport routes to coincide with "bubbles".
- o. If children show any sign of infection (**high temperature, loss of smell or taste or a new, continuous cough**) they should not come to school or use school transport (child to self-isolate for seven days, family members for 14 days from the time when the child becomes symptomatic). In this case parents should contact the "Test-and-Trace" service as quickly as possible. If symptoms appear at school the child will be isolated awaiting the arrival of parents to collect.
- p. Our efforts are to make school a safe place for all children, but we are aware that the long interruption of the school community makes us concerned that some children will take some time to adjust and settle back in. We will work hard to make this as smooth and positive as possible, but those with challenging behaviour will only be able to remain in school where behaviour management plans are proving effective. In these circumstances parents will be asked to come and collect their child, as above.
- q. **In the case of a confirmed infection it will be necessary for school to close for a 14-day period, as we are not physically able to maintain separated bubbles within our schools.**

We understand that this year has been a particularly challenging one; for children and adults alike. The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown has been an unprecedented situation in modern

times. It is hard to gauge the full impact that the situation has had (and possibly is continuing to have) on children's mental health and wellbeing. Our children's experiences of the lockdown period will have been very varied. From the feedback that we have received, for most of our children, it has predominantly been a safe and enjoyable time. However, for others, it may have been more challenging or traumatic for a number of different reasons. As a school, our staff team are used to supporting our children through any challenges that they face in life and they have shown that they are very good at doing this - we will; of course, continue to do this in September.

We hope that by putting all of these measures in place, we are able to provide children with a solid foundation with which to build upon over the summer holidays as they prepare for their return to school in September. Our aim is to also reduce (as much as we possibly can) the anxiety that children may be experiencing about returning – especially those who have been at home since the school closures in March.

Similarly, in September, the return to school may be the first contact that children have had with each other in many weeks. Launching straight back into the usual timetable is likely to be challenging, as many of our children have had a long period of time away from the usual daily routine. They may also have lots of thoughts and questions about the time away from school. Of course, there is also a need to make sure children begin catching up on work they have missed, which is a predominant focus by the government. Gradually phasing in lessons, balancing more academic lessons with creative ones, is an approach that we are going to undertake.

We are also aware that some children may have been socially isolated during this time and have not been able to speak to or see relatives or friends. The staff team will follow appropriate measures to reintegrate the children back into school life, safely, with their peers. We have acknowledged that staff can continue to follow recognised training advice and will use de-escalation techniques to aim to calm most situations should they arise. We will not, however, be able to use handling techniques when behaviour becomes more challenging. This particular situation would extend beyond what we are able to do to keep all children as safe as possible and we would therefore contact you to collect your child if the safety of others, adults included, was compromised in any way and we would seek your support with this given the pandemic circumstances.

As always, we thank you for your continued support and co-operation in these unprecedented and challenging times. Should you have any further questions regarding the information in this letter please do not hesitate to contact us (Mrs Hutchinson – sarah.hutchinson@greenheadprimary.uk Mr Ratcliff – r.david.ratclif@gmail.com) In addition we will be hosting a Question and Answer session about a week before the start of next term, where parents can ask us any questions about our plans. We will send details to all nearer the time in August.

We have truly missed our children and families very much and we look forward to seeing you all again as one entire community.

Looking forward to seeing you all again soon!

Yours sincerely



The WTCS Governing Body

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Statement of Understanding and Agreement: September 2020

I agree to follow the school risk assessment and Government and NHS guidance. I will adhere to the school drop off and collection times and will be prompt.

I understand that the staff will do their utmost to keep my child/ children safe whilst they are at school by following correct social distancing measures but they cannot 100% guarantee that the children will not breach the 1 metre + guidance.

I will keep my child at home if they are showing symptoms of COVID19 (symptoms include a high temperature, loss of smell or taste or a new, continuous cough) and will inform the school staff immediately.

I understand that my child, although operating for most of the time in their class bubble, will be part of a whole school bubble and will be mixing with all staff and all children.

My contact details are up to date so that the school staff can contact me if needed and I will collect my child if necessary. *

I will collect my child if requested to do so regarding challenging behaviour to protect the safety of others.

Signed:

Date:

***If any of your contact details have changed in the last 12 months, please add them below.**