

Upham Primary School

Church of England (Aided)

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Thursday 21 May 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing to explain what we are planning for the first step of the school recovery process, the reopening for Years R, 1 and 6 proposed for June 1st. There is a lot of information here which reflects how many decisions we have had to make. Please note that this covers the initial recovery of the first few weeks. Undoubtedly, following this there will need to be changes to our approach and a new plan.

I need every family in just Years R, 1, 6 and those of you who are key workers to reply to this letter indicating if you intend your child to return or not – please carefully read the guidance below before completing a reply to adminoffice@upham.hants.sch.uk If you have siblings in these groups, please refer to both children.

For those of you in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 this is just for information.

How will the children be organised?

The government has set the expectation of children returning to classes of 15. This is straightforward for us to work with as that's our admission group anyway. Therefore Mrs Mason will continue to work with Year R in Class 1, Mrs Sothcott and Miss Renno with Year 1 in Class 2 and Miss Olver with Year 6 in Class 4. We also have to provide for children of key worker parents so that group will be with Mrs Bird in Class 3.

Is it safe having 15 in a class?

The government says 'yes it is' as that is what they have required schools to do.

We are more concerned about this. From the first steps back into school, children are going to have to avoid physical interactions, closeness and freely approaching others – this goes against all their natural instincts and it will take time for the children, particularly the youngest, to achieve this. I have measured class spaces to see if appropriate separation can be achieved for 15 children. It is tight but can just be achieved. However, it will require children to understand the 'new rules' of how to be in the classroom and that cannot be achieved from day 1. We therefore intend to step-up towards the 15 at a time, initially with a smaller group of around half this size. Many parents have already indicated they will not send their child back in at this point in time, so we know that 15 will reduce. If, following parent replies to this letter, numbers are still greater than around half we will need to divide the 15 (for Year R, 1 and 6) up into two smaller populations. One population coming into school on just Monday and Tuesday, the other coming in from Wednesday to Friday. The following week we would then switch the days to be fair. After this initial two week period we might then be in a position to combine the two populations back to the 15 for every day. If we were to do this, we would ensure siblings would do the same days.

Class 1 is our smallest space which makes the situation even harder – we have emptied the whole room of all but the essential furniture to maximise every part but it is tight.

Will the children all arrive at the same time?

No – it is important that children and adults do not gather. We will therefore stagger start times and collection times during the day (there are a couple of families with siblings across these groups and we will negotiate a solution for you):

- Year 6 and key worker children arrive 8.45am, hometime 3.30pm
- Year 1 arrive 9am, hometime 3.15pm
- Year R arrive 9.15am, hometime 3.00pm

It will be vital that parents do not stand around chatting, tempting as this is. Please drop off or collect your child and leave promptly.

Do I have to send my child in?

No. The government have stated that it is parental decision whether to attend school or not. Many of you will already be shielding due to a health concern for your child or a member of you family and you can continue to do this.

If you choose not to attend, there will not be any fines or action taken; the law regarding attendance has been temporarily suspended.

When will it be confirmed that the government is definitely going ahead with the June 1 date?

I do not know.

The government may decide to suspend or change their timescale at any point but I do not know when that will be. I anticipate at some point during next week it will have to be confirmed, but that is my speculation.

What will my child learn in school? Will not being in school mean they miss out?

We want to attempt to keep children in and out of school together so the children in-school will also follow the homelearning set for those at home to access. During this initial period, there will not be any additional teaching in school. We cannot teach how we would normally – we can't even sit next to a child to support them through something, we will have to distance ourselves, which is hugely limiting.

What will happen for my child who is not in Years R, 1 or 6?

Teachers will be with children all day in school so the time they have to enable the home-learning will be dramatically reduced. We will continue with the day-by-day approach we have used but it will have to scale back somewhat. The communication via email is likely to be the main thing to suffer as teachers cannot do two roles at the same time. We will do our best to provide for Years 2,3,4 and 5 and those home-learning from Years R,1 and 6.

What about separation at playtimes and lunch?

We are lucky to have so much outside space for a small school so at playtimes and lunchtimes children will continue to go outside but will have to stay in their zone. Groups will not be allowed to mix – for example Year 6 buddies will not be able to interact with Year Rs. The zones will be the playground, the challenge trail area, the top half of the field and the bottom of the field. Children will stay in a zone throughout the day, moving to the next zone on the next day. This allows us to keep groups separated and clean equipment such as the challenge trail, in between. If the weather is poor then we may need to stagger playtimes and restrict areas of use.

Will my child be able to play with all their friends?

No, and this will be the most dramatic implication for children.

The year groups will be separated and won't interact at playtimes, lunch or any other times. The usual whole school gatherings such as assembly time will not happen. At lunch time younger children will eat in the hall but well separated whilst keyworker children and Year 6 eat in their classrooms. Within each class

group we will then sub-divide into smaller 3s and 4s and encourage play amongst this group only. The government makes reference to the idea of 'bubbles' and these separated groups are these 'bubbles'.

Can siblings come in too?

No

The government has made the decision to only allow Year R, 1, 6 and key worker children.

What about key workers?

Children of key workers will continue to be provided for, as we have over the last 9 weeks. Where we have had such a small number we have been relatively relaxed as they use the whole space. This group have been relatively constant so have become their own 'bubble'. Things will feel very different to them from June 1 as the distancing rules become more tangible and obvious and they are restricted in the same way as everyone else. They also need to learn how to 'be' in this new phase.

Will lunches still be available?

Yes

Hampshire catering continue to provide lunches in the usual way. These continue to be free for Years R and 1 and paid for in the usual manner for other children. Packed lunches are also fine. The menu is a little more restricted than normal, due to supply issues, but there will continue to be a vegetarian and meat option. I will send the menu out next week. Meals for children with identified allergies can still be provided.

What will school be like?

Very different. Children will have set places and use the same table and chair to avoid cross contamination. There will not be the usual collaborative learning as children will be separate. Learning will be particularly different for year R children as they cannot have the usual free access to toys that they share and pass around. We have completely emptied the whole classroom and cleaned it and will restock with just the bare essentials. Children in Years 1, 6 and keyworkers will all sit at a desk table facing the board and be directed from there. Queues and lining up will be avoided and children will be more directed, one at a time. We are lucky as a school in that children have such easy access to toilets in their classrooms. However, children won't be able to just get up and wander, they will need to ask so that gatherings in toilet area are minimised. We will of course allow children to go whenever they need to but this does need some managing. There will be high emphasis on hand washing before and after activities, as they enter the building and before food.

Can my child bring in water bottles?

Yes, they will need to.

A named water bottle is perfect and can be kept on their desk to be drunk throughout the day. This is especially important as the weather gets warmer. The shared outside water fountain will not be available for safety.

Please also avoid possessions – children will be provided with equipment and bags, pencil cases etc are all unnecessary extras that can be contaminated. Book bags for younger children will be fine.

What should they wear?

Normal school uniform – This will help the children feel 'more normal' about school. However, the children will have grown and you might struggle with fit. We will not worry if you need to make a sensible substitute as you cannot purchase new easily. There will not be shared places for clothing, such as jumpers, so make sure they are named and children will hang them on their chair. A reminder that children cannot wear sandals; shoes should cover the whole foot.

Will parents be able to come in? – what if I need to share something?

No. We will not be allowing other adults into school other than our usual staff, except for PE Dave and the planned return of Mrs Pilgrim from maternity later in June.

If you have something you need to share, then please phone the school office or send an email. Please also avoid approaching staff at hometime, we all need to socially distance for all of our safety.

The toilets in the office area will only be for staff use, not visitors, parents or for younger children.

How will people be separated on collection?

At hometime, there will be an in/ out one-way system marked with barriers to ensure people do not crowd. Please separate with the 2m gap. On the playground I will mark 2m spaces that families can wait in and be sure of distancing. When children come outside they will wait on markers so they are separated too. Do not allow children, including pre-schools to play or run around on the playground, they need to be by your side.

Will there be additional cleaning?

Yes and teachers will have cleaning ‘pack’ in school to address key areas during the day.

Should my child wear a mask?

No.

Though the government is in general advising to face coverings, their advice to schools is clear: *‘Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended...Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings.’* (DfE schools Guidance)

The other issue of course is that children fiddle with things – every time they fidget and adjust a face covering (which they will) it is contaminated so simply won’t work. It will also alarm them and without being able to see each other’s faces school would become truly pointless.

If you want to wear a face covering on drop off and collection that’s fine, though at your discretion.

Will there be breakfast club or after school clubs?

No

Breakfast club and after school club providers are not yet available. This may change as the term progresses, depending on changing government advice.

What if I change my mind about sending my child or keeping them home?

If your thoughts change, please communicate via the adminoffice@upham.hants.sch.uk address or phone the office.

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Please let us know if you intend your Year R, 1 or 6 child to return to school via email to adminoffice@upham.hants.sch.uk