



# The Southwater Infant Academy

## “Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together”

19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Families

I sincerely hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well. I promised to keep in communication with you over the proposed reopening of schools on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, so thought I would write with an update. As you will no doubt be aware, the Government’s plan is for schools to begin to reopen more widely for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 as well as for some face-to-face time in school for Years 10 and 12. The current childcare provision for children of keyworkers and for some groups of vulnerable children will continue as it does currently.

At the outset of this latest update, I will reiterate that we understand the concerns that you will have about your child during this period of national crisis. Equally, I will also repeat a message I have stated previously: ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all children and staff will be our primary consideration before the infant academy can even begin to take in more children.

It is important to also remember some key points from these proposals.

- The 1<sup>st</sup> June was cited as the *very earliest date* by which schools *might be able* to open
- Any wider reopening of schools is dependent upon the Government’s *5 Key Tests* being satisfied. At present these have not been satisfied and, until they are, any prospect of any return for more children, outside of those attending for the current childcare provision, is completely hypothetical

It is also important to note that the Government’s plans are not mandatory at present; instead, they are recommended. However, every one of us at the infants shares a common goal, which is to do our very best (but only when it is safe to do so) to enable our children to begin a phased return to the academy. Whether we can achieve that in June, or even ahead of the summer holidays, remains to be seen. There may well be a host of reasons as to why we might not be able to achieve that goal. Nevertheless, we are continuing to plan for what we might be able to do safely.

From the infant academy’s point of view, we are taking a very calm and measured approach to planning and risk assessment, rather than producing fixed plans right now. Those risk assessments will be vital for us to evaluate:

- Whether it can be made sufficiently safe for children and staff to reopen for all pupils in each of the designated year groups
- Whether it is safe for children and staff to reopen for some pupils in each of the selected year groups
- Whether it is safe for children and staff to reopen for just one year group at a time
- Whether it is unsafe to reopen

As you will appreciate, there are many factors that we need to consider when carrying out our risk assessments and planning, but please rest assured that all of us at the infants will do what we can to achieve the best provision possible. On this note, I would like to thank all our Reception and Year 1 families who have completed the snapshot survey we sent out at the end of last week. This has enabled us to get a rough idea of the numbers of families that will be considering sending their child back to the academy should we reopen in June, and will inform our planning processes as we go forwards. Once that planning and risk assessment work has been completed, I will update you further. The survey is still open for any parents that still wish to take part - please note that this is not a commitment to send your child back to school!

Finally, I would like to make an important point that I feel I need to share with you. The things I have written today are what we would like to do. In an ideal world (i.e. not the one we all temporarily inhabit) we would love to get all children back into school as soon as humanly possible. What I have outlined above is our response to the recommendations made by Mr Johnson and the Government. However, as a parent myself, I realise that some of you will still be very afraid of the world as it is, and despite any assurances from me or others, may well consider that you cannot send your child back to school at this stage. Please rest assured that we understand. There will be no pressure applied from us (or indeed, by the Government) if you choose to keep your child at home until a future date, when you feel it is safer. All I am trying to do here is to give you an absolute assurance that we are going to try our best to give you the choice as to whether or not you wish to send your child back to school at some point this side of the summer holidays. That choice may actually be taken out of our hands due to external factors (such as the *5 Key Tests* not being satisfied) or by internal factors, following the risk assessments I have outlined in this letter. However, we will at least try to help you make an informed choice.

What we are unable to do is offer a world of zero risk; however if we can mitigate risk to a minimum then we will let you know what we can provide and you can then decide whether you want to send your child into school.

I shall write to you again once the main part of our planning is completed. I apologise for the length of this letter and so below I have included a list of responses to some of the Frequently Asked Questions that came up during our survey.

Please bear with us – you have been amazing in your support for us so far, and it is vitally important that we continue to work together through the challenging times ahead. Thank you for all that you are doing to help us to keep education going, be that by helping to home-school your child, through helping them access online learning or just by providing some daily structure to their life in this topsy-turvy world. All of your support will continue to make a big difference, and all of us at the infant academy really appreciate what you are doing to help us.

Please continue to take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

With my very best wishes to you all



## Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Why have these year groups been selected?	These year groups have been selected by the government. The suggestion is that younger children are in the early stages of learning, so learning time is especially important.
Will all of these Year Groups go back to school on 1 <sup>st</sup> June?	No. The 1 <sup>st</sup> June is simply the <i>very earliest date</i> on which schools might be able to reopen more widely in some form.
Will the childcare provision for children of keyworkers and for other vulnerable children continue as usual?	Yes. The provision that has been operating since Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> March will continue.
Will my child have to attend every day you are open if I send them back?	We would ask that parents please send their child every day that we are open for them, as teachers will be planning progressive learning for them. It will become very difficult to organise and manage provision if parents are selective about which days children will attend.
Have there been any incidents relating to Covid-19 at the academy during the lockdown period?	We have continued to open throughout this period, including half terms and holidays, and have had no incidents to date.
What will the groups sizes be?	The government has set group sizes at a maximum of 15. We hope to have lower numbers than this, but it is dependent on the numbers of families wishing to send their child back. We will not be able to confirm exact group sizes until nearer the time.
Will children mix with their friends?	In some cases, yes. We will try to organise groups to include friendships between children, but cannot guarantee that all a child's friends will be in the same group. There will be no interaction between groups, which means that children will only play with those in their organised group.
Will children have segregated areas marked off to stop them coming into contact with each other?	There will be separate play areas for each group to ensure that each group remains separate from the others. We will not be marking out squares on the playground for individual children to play in in isolation however.
How will drop off and pick up work?	We will be arranging staggered drop off and pick up times. This means that the academy day will not necessarily be the same for each child, but will reduce the number of families coming to the gate at any one time.
What will happen at lunchtime?	We will be staggering break and lunchtimes too to minimize the risk of groups coming into contact with each other. We are working with Easy Lunch to agree the best lunch provision regarding safety and ease of organisation but anticipate that a lunch of some sort will be provided for each child. Lunches will be eaten in classes to avoid the risk of cross infection from lots of groups moving in corridors and using the hall.
Will home learning still carry on for those children whose families choose not to send them back or who aren't in one of the selected year groups for return?	Home learning will continue, though we would ask that our families remember that teachers will be spending each day working at the academy. As such, responses from teachers to Tapestry posts may not be until the end of the week. We would aim to have the same learning tasks planning for in school children and for those who are remaining at home.

Will extra cleaning take place?	Extra cleaning will be done throughout the day. The government has released guidance on this for schools. Children will be asked to wash their hands regularly throughout the day, and especially before and after eating.
How will you make sure children stay 2m apart?	We can't is the honest answer here! We will do our best to maintain some distance between children, and will encourage them to reduce contact and be mindful of not getting too close. Even the government acknowledges that social distancing between young children is not feasible. In planning our provision we will also be mindful of the social and mental wellbeing needs of our children.
Will this be education or childcare?	This will be education, but a large focus will be placed on the wellbeing of the children. It is essential that all children returning to the academy feel safe and secure as a priority, or they will not be able to learn effectively. Literacy, numeracy and other learning will take place when children are ready.
Will children have to wear face masks?	No, we are not asking children to wear face masks. The government has stated that this is not necessary in schools as long as good hygiene methods are used.
What happens if a child develops symptoms at the academy?	If a child develops symptoms we will call the parents or carers and ask them to pick the child up as soon as possible. We would request that this is done within 30 minutes. During this time, the child will be moved to a separate room with a known member of staff to reduce the risk of infection to other staff or children. Someone will stay with the child until they are collected.
Will my child have to repeat a year?	No, this is not something we are planning for at the moment. Any move to repeat years would need to be introduced at a national level by the government due to the knock on effect this would have on other educational provisions.
How will you manage transition to the next year group?	This is something we are discussing at the moment at the infant academy. We are hoping for all children at the academy to get some time with their new teacher before the end of the school year. For Year 2 children, we are in discussion with the junior academy about this already. We are hoping to be in contact with our Year 2 parents soon with some more details about this.
Will my child have their usual teacher?	Due to the fact that some staff may need to shield, and the small group sizes that we need to maintain, we cannot guarantee that your child will have their usual teacher unfortunately. All the staff at the academy are qualified to teach all year groups, and the staff will be working as a team to plan and deliver the learning across the groups that come into school.