



1 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Welcome back to school

I hope you have all had a relaxing summer holiday and well-deserved break after what has been a very unusual 2020 so far! It was a delight to see so many children taking up the offer of a few days in school with their teacher and classmates at the end of the summer term, and we are very much looking forward to welcoming all children back to school in the Autumn Term.

If your child is starting in the Foundation Stage in September, a warm welcome to Pickwick Academy Trust and your chosen school – we look forward to getting to know you and your child over the coming months.

I am sure you have been following the COVID-19 and education related news closely during July and August, so I wanted to write to reiterate our strategy and risk mitigation measures for reopening our schools.

The government remain clear that they want all children back in full-time education in September and that attendance will become compulsory again. Over the summer, they have updated the guidelines that schools are required to work with as well as the information for parents with children returning to school:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

The guidance states that given that the prevalence of COVID-19 has decreased, ‘the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school’ and that ‘for the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from COVID-19’.

The guidance goes on to describe the protective risk mitigation control measures that schools will need to put in place to ‘reduce the risk of transmission’ and notes that schools will need to ‘plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education’.

Our strategy is in line with the updated government guidance, and continues many of the risk mitigation control measures that we had in place during the summer term.

- All children will be taught by their class teacher in class-size ‘bubbles’ (there is no longer the requirement to limit bubble sizes to 15).
- Children within these class bubbles will not be required to keep socially distant from each other, but the bubbles themselves will be kept apart to limit contact between groups – mass gatherings such as assemblies will not restart for the foreseeable future.

- Teachers and support staff will be able to move between and teach multiple bubbles, but will, as far as practically possible, limit the amount of time they spend within one metre of the children.
- To reduce the risk of transmission at break and lunchtime, scheduled times and areas of the playground have been allocated, so children can play together outside in year group(s) or phase cohorts.
- School leaders will continue to implement measures to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school - the use of communal areas will be restricted, procedures for moving around school will be used, rota systems will remain in place regarding the use of staffrooms and staggered breaks/lunches will continue.
- Outdoor play equipment is now able to be used and many of the resources that were removed from classrooms have been returned, to be shared within the bubble (these will be cleaned regularly).
- Children are now allowed to bring lunchboxes to school and can take reading books home (although unnecessary sharing should be avoided).
- Schools will continue to implement staggered starts/finishes to the school day and discourage adults and children from gathering on the school grounds.
- Personal hygiene and regular hand washing continue to be an important risk mitigation measure in schools.
- Robust and regular cleaning routines that have already been established across our schools will continue to take place, paying particular attention to frequently touched surfaces and toilet facilities.
- Face coverings/masks are not required for children and staff in the classroom, or whilst transitioning around the school. In the event of a local lockdown or widespread transmission in the locality, this measure will be reviewed. The government is not recommending that face coverings are necessary in primary education settings. This is due to the mitigating measure of children being educated and moving around the school in their class/year group(s) or phase bubbles, minimising contact with people outside of their bubble. Government guidance states: 'Based on current evidence and the measures that schools are already putting in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible.' They go on to say that 'face coverings would have a negative impact on teaching and their use in the classroom should be avoided'. If, however, you would like your child to wear a face covering they will be allowed to do so – the child will need to know how to put it on and take it off properly, washing their hands each time, and the covering will need to be clean each day. You will need to supply a sealable plastic bag to store it in when not being worn. Staff will be able to choose whether they want to wear face coverings.
- Staff will continue to be encouraged to maintain a 2m distance from colleagues where possible and may choose to wear face coverings when in communal staff spaces.
- People displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and/or those that are ill will continue to be required to stay at home.
- If anyone in the school develops COVID-19 like symptoms they will be sent home, advised to self-isolate for 10 days (amended by the government from 7 days previously) and asked to have a test; if the test comes back negative they will be able to return to school as long as they are feeling well. We no longer require all children in the bubble to be sent home in the event that someone has symptoms, but will continue to contact all the parents within that bubble/year group(s)/phase so that they can decide whether to keep their child off school as a precaution while we wait for the outcome of the test.
- In the event of a positive COVID-19 test result, all the children and adults within the class/year group(s)/phase bubble will be sent home and asked to self-isolate as per government guidelines. Public Health England will be consulted and a decision will be made

whether to close further bubbles, larger parts of the school or the whole school following a risk assessment.

- Staff and families will be expected to engage with any NHS Test and Trace requests.
- Risk assessments have been updated for the return of all pupils, and plans are in place to provide remote home learning in the event of a full or partial local lockdown, to ensure that children can continue to be educated from home.

Government shielding advice has now been relaxed which means that the vast majority of children and staff who have been shielding will be able to return to school. Please contact your school to discuss your particular situation if you have any questions.

Whilst we are actively encouraging all children to attend school, we are mindful that some parents and children may still be anxious about coming back. If you have any worries, please contact your school so we can provide advice, reassurance and support, and talk to you about the ways we are reducing the risk of transmission in school.

Government guidance asks schools to 'consider resuming breakfast and after-school provision' but recognises that schools 'may need to respond flexibly and build this up over time'. We understand how important it is to get this provision back in place - school leaders will communicate their plans for this as soon as they are developed.

We are looking forward to spending time with your children, celebrating the successes of what they have achieved over the last few months and identifying any gaps they have in their learning. We will spend time building relationships, readjusting to school life and routines, focussing on mental health and well-being, and taking part in lots of outdoor activities together.

Through the blend of school-based and home learning that took place in the summer term, we have enjoyed working with you as partners to support your child's learning. We will continue to use our online platforms such as Tapestry, SeeSaw and Purple Mash to share what we are doing in school and continue to inform, involve and support you with your child's learning at school and at home. It would be great to hear how the last few months have been for you and your family - you may have already shared your thoughts about lockdown and home learning with your school, but if not please do talk with your child's new teacher to let them know your highlights and any learning areas you feel need developing with your child.

I look forward to seeing you over the coming months in our fantastic schools.

Yours faithfully,



James Passmore
Chief Executive Officer
Pickwick Academy Trust
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