



14 July 2020

Dear Parents, Carers, Governors and Staff

RE: September Opening

End of Term 6 opening for all children

I wrote to you at the end of June to outline our strategy for bringing all children back for some face-to-face time with their teachers and classmates before the end of the summer term. As you know, this is intended to provide the opportunity for every child to engage in some closure and transition activities, and support teachers in preparing learning for September.

I recognise that this is another change in the provision we are offering, and know that it is causing some of you whose children have been in school in key worker, Y6, Y1 and YR bubbles some challenges regarding childcare. We really appreciate your support and understanding with this as we try to ensure that all children have an opportunity to finish their year with some time in school.

Your child's school will have been in contact with you to provide details of the end of term offer they are able to make, and I very much hope that your child will enjoy and benefit from coming into school before the holidays start. I would like to say a huge thank you to all the school leaders and governors who have worked tirelessly to put this provision in place.

Latest September opening government guidance:

In my last letter, I explained that the government's intention is to bring all children back full time in September. They have now confirmed the guidelines that schools will be required to work with, which have been developed in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), which you can view using this link:

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

In addition, the government have published guidance for parents with children returning to school: <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 plan is for all children, in all year groups, to return to school full-time from the beginning of the Autumn Term, and attendance will become compulsory again. 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 'proportionate protective [risk mitigation] measures' that schools will need to put in place to 'reduce the risk of transmission'. The guidance also notes that schools will need to 'plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education'.

Our Strategy for September

We anticipated that this would be the direction and guidance, and have been working on plans for delivering a full-time return with mitigation measures in September, as well as contingencies in the event of a second national COVID-19 spike or localised lockdown.

Schools will write to you to provide details of their September opening plans, including any phased return and/or transition time that has been planned in the first few weeks back, but I wanted to summarise our overarching strategy below.

Our strategy is in line with the updated government guidance, and continues many of the risk mitigation measures that we currently have in place.

- All children, in all year groups, will be welcomed back to school in September and will be taught by their class teacher in class-size 'bubbles' (there will no longer be 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 will be allocated, so children can play together outside in year group(s) 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 will now be able to be used and many of the resources that have been removed from classrooms can be returned for use and shared within the bubble (these will be cleaned regularly)
- Children will be allowed to bring lunchboxes to school in September, and will be able to take reading books home (although unnecessary sharing should be avoided)
- Staff will continue to be encouraged to maintain a 2m distance from colleagues where possible.
- 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 will remain an important risk mitigation measure in schools.
- Robust and regular cleaning routines that are already established across our schools will continue to take place, paying particular attention to frequently touched surfaces and toilet facilities.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will continue not to be required for children and staff (as per PHE guidelines), although if people want to wear it they will be allowed to do so.
- 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 at least 7 days and asked to have a test; if the test comes back negative they will be able to return to school. From September, we will relax our measure requiring all children in the bubble to be sent home in the event that someone has symptoms, but will contact all the parents within that bubble/year group(s) 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 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 Track and Trace requests.
- Risk assessments, agreed by governors and trustees, will be updated ready for September and plans for full or partial school closures will be in place as a contingency.
- Each school will build on the work it has already done in delivering a range of remote home learning provision to ensure that in the event of a full or partial local lockdown children can continue to be educated from home.

Attendance

From September, the government have made it clear that full-time schooling will become compulsory again and that it is 'vital that all children return to school to minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, well-being and wider development'. They have explained that the usual rules around school attendance will apply.

Whilst we will be actively encouraging all children to attend school in September, we are mindful that some parents and children may still be anxious about coming back. We want to work with you to ensure you and your child are confident and supported with returning to school.

If you are worried about your child returning in September, 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.

Shielding

Government shielding advice for all adults and children will be relaxed on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of COVID-19. This 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.

Before and after school provision

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'. School leaders are exploring how they can put this provision back in place whilst continuing to follow the latest government transmission risk mitigation guidance. Each school will communicate their plans for this as they are developed.

Curriculum

You may have read in the media that schools will be 'narrowing' their curriculum to focus only on the core subjects in the Autumn Term. We will not be doing this, instead we will ensure that our curriculum continues to be broad and balanced, and focussed on developing strong skills and knowledge across all curriculum areas.

We will spend time working with the children to celebrate the successes of what they have achieved over the last few months and identify the gaps they have in their learning in very much the same way teachers do with their classes every year. We will also 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.

As I mentioned in my last letter, I am keen that we capitalise on the successes of connecting more deeply with you in your children's learning, through the blend of home and school learning that has taken place, and continue to develop the way we work together in partnership

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 to help involve you and support you with your child's learning at home.

Summer holiday child-care provision

Schools will signpost parents and carers to child-care and/or holiday club provision that is available in the area. We are working with In2Sport to offer sports holiday club provision at three of our schools: Aloeric, Corsham's Pound Pill site and Queen's Crescent which any children from our schools can access.

This will also be offered to the wider community to support all families looking for child-care over the summer holidays. Your school will communicate more details about this shortly.

New starters in September

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new children and families who are joining us from September. I know that schools are working hard to ensure that transition to school will be as smooth as possible and have adapted their usual communication methods, processes and induction arrangements. We are aware that many children will not have attended nurseries and pre-school child-care settings over the last few months, so we will be working together with you to ensure that child settles in and gets used to routines in school. We are very much looking forward to meeting you and welcoming your child into our family of schools. If you have any questions about your child starting in September please contact your new school who will be delighted to meet and talk this through with you.

Thank you

Once again, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the staff and governors across our schools who have worked with such professionalism, dedication, enthusiasm and energy throughout this COVID-19 situation – it really is very much appreciated.

Thank you for your support, patience and feedback as we continue to navigate through this process. We will continue to provide you with regular updates, via each school, as the situation evolves.

Have a lovely summer break when it arrives - I look forward to seeing you over the next week and in September.

Yours faithfully,



James Passmore
Chief Executive Officer
Pickwick Academy Trust
www.pickwickacademytrust.co.uk