



St George's C of E School
(Part of SDBE Multi Academy Trust)

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21st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

On Sunday 10th May, the Prime Minister announced that from 1st June he hoped that some primary pupils could return to schools in England, if the scientific advice allowed. There continues to be discussion about when a track and trace service will be in place and the Government has stated they will make a final announcement about schools re-opening on 28th May. It is, however, the Governing Body's role to *make the final decision on when and how to safely re-open the school to more pupils.*

St George's school has remained open for the children identified as vulnerable and the children of critical workers throughout the lockdown. Staff members have been coming into school on a rota system, we have also been facilitating free school meals, vouchers, and food parcels for those families in need.

In coming to our decision to now re-open the school to more children, we have reviewed all the scientific evidence that is currently available, looked at other Educational models, reviewed staffing levels, building issues and given our high percentage of BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) families, the specific safety issues in our wider school community. In addition, we looked at the impact implementing the Government's protective measures would have on children, from their age and developmental stage given that they will be entering back into classrooms that will be very different from the ones they left before lockdown.

These protective measures brought in by the Government to prevent transmission, will mean that children will be placed in small groups or 'bubbles' supervised by an adult (not necessarily their teacher) and they will not be allowed to mix with children in other groups. Movement in and around the school would be kept to a minimum; the curriculum would be a 'recovery' curriculum and hand washing a regular part of the day. Access to the outside and playtimes would be timetabled and children would have to stay 2 metres apart at all times. All toys or intricate resources and equipment that cannot be washed will be packed away.

There is a lot of conflicting and contradictory advice available related to Covid 19 and the transmission of infection. We are still very much at the early stages of scientific knowledge about the disease and how it spreads and this advice changes constantly. This has led to a lot of anxiety and fear amongst parents and staff. We also took into account the alert that has been issued to GPs of an inflammatory syndrome affecting young children that appears to be related to Covid-19.

Looking at all the risk factors identified by scientists, we were concerned at the high percentage of deaths in the BAME community, the reasons for which have yet to be explained. Given that over 86% of our families are from this community and that recently the Local Government Association has recommended that schools with communities who are in high risk category delay re-opening, we have considered this very carefully in our deliberations.

We looked at the suggested model of Denmark, however, found that given the country's size and relatively low death rate it was not the best comparison. In addition, children in Denmark do not start school until the age of 6, this would be year 1 in the UK. In Germany, they have approached re-opening differently by opening to 11-12 year olds first, on basis that the older children will have a better understanding of social distancing.

Finally, we reviewed risk assessments for our buildings and staffing levels that would be necessary to safely allow for wider re-opening of school. As the buildings have not been in use for over 8 weeks, there are health and safety measures that have to be put in place before allowing more children into the buildings. One-way systems will have to be introduced and signage put up. There has been a high demand on companies who provide services to schools checking water systems and fire safety which has meant that those checks will not be fully completed until the week commencing 8th June at earliest.

At our meeting on Wednesday 20th May the Governing Body, following a full discussion, made the following decision: The school will start to re-open in a cautious and controlled way as follows:-

Monday 1st June - School open to children of critical workers and vulnerable

Monday 8th June – Children in year 6 welcomed back into school

Monday 15th June. – Children in year 1 welcomed back into school

Monday 6th July - EYFS building reopened to Reception class to allow for a transition period before end of term.

(These dates are dependent on all safety measures being in place and Government scientific advice, which could be subject to change).

Given the requirement that children must be taught in much smaller groups in different rooms and also the current issues with staff availability, we will not be in a position to re-open to pupils of other year groups, including the Nursery, until September. The online learning will continue and we will be writing to parents early in the next half term informing them of which classes children will be in next year.

Parents in Year 6, Year 1 and Reception will be sent a separate letter and the Government has stated that any parent who chooses to not send their child in will not be fined.

These are unprecedented times with many of us having personally been impacted by Covid-19, losing friends and loved ones. The pressures on families, both financially and emotionally, continues to be great and the impact will be felt well into the future. St George's will continue to play our part supporting children, families and our local community in the best ways that we can. However, *as a leadership team and as Governors, whilst recognising our many responsibilities, none can be more important than ensuring the safety of our pupils, staff and parents.*

Yours sincerely



Mrs G Constable
Headteacher



Jill Bray
Chair of Governors