

## Barrow Island Community Primary School

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### Planned Reopening of Schools

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you following the Government's recent announcement that signals the start of a phased return of children to schools. This is a long letter which I hope will answer many of your questions.

At the moment, the government's intention is to open primary schools initially in reduced numbers to children from certain year groups from possibly as early as 1<sup>st</sup> June, with the ambition of bringing in all primary year groups before the summer holidays. It is important to state from the outset that **this plan is conditional and depends upon whether the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time**. However, schools are being asked to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that these tests are met.

I would like to emphasise again that the safety of children, families and staff remains of paramount concern. We are currently in a **RISK ASSESSMENT PHASE** as directed by the Department for Education. We would like to stress our plans to prepare for a phased return will be based upon thorough planning to determine our capacity to implement the protective measures outlined by the Government for schools. This process is being carried out by all schools both locally and nationally at this time. And, whilst the plans in individual schools may eventually differ slightly based upon local circumstances, we are working closely with other local schools.

In order to support our planning, it is essential at this stage that we are able to determine the level of demand for places. At this stage we would like to ask parents of children in the following groups to let us know whether they intend for their child to return to school when the phased return commences: Please complete the questionnaire on Parentapp

- Children of Key Workers essential to the Government's COVID-19 Response (Those currently eligible to attend childcare at a Hub school.
- Children with an EHCP or allocated social worker
- Pre-school - Only if your child will start in reception in September 2020
- Reception
- Year One
- Year Six
- *Children with conditions which render them clinically extremely vulnerable **should not attend school**. Children who live with someone with conditions which render them clinically extremely vulnerable **should not attend school**. A list of these conditions is included as an appendix at the end of the letter.*

The government's decision to begin with these groups of children is stated as "because there is moderately high scientific confidence in evidence suggesting younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19)" although the extent to which they act as carriers is not universally understood.

It is important to stress that we recognise that the decision whether or not you send your child back to school as part of the phased return is an extremely difficult one. I would like to stress that at Barrow Island CP School there is **no expectation** that parents should choose to send their children to school as part of this phased return

should they not wish to. You should give careful consideration to the question before making a decision. During this period **attendance at school** will not be monitored in the usual way. Parents **will not** face consequences for non-attendance and schools **will not be held to account** for attendance levels.

You will appreciate that our final offer will be determined once the **risk assessment period** is satisfactorily completed by school leaders and governors and this is currently subject to change as further guidance is provided by the DFE, Local Authority and unions. However, preparations have begun based upon how we will implement the protective measures outlined by the government and what school may look like. I feel that an understanding of "what school might look like" will be invaluable when coming to your decision.

### **Preparations to implement protective measures outlined by the Government.**

The government recognises that, "unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff". Therefore, protective measures recommended by the government will **not include social distancing as we have come to understand it**. Instead schools should take into account the following hierarchy of measures:

- Avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- Frequent hand cleaning and good food hygiene practices
- Regular cleaning of settings
- Minimising contact and mixing

At Barrow Island CP School we are working hard to put into place rigorous control measures to best meet these requirements. Parents should be advised that the safety of children, families and staff remain our highest priority. **We will always strive to reduce risk by adhering to the latest guidance and stringent safety practices however, we are unable to guarantee the complete removal of risk.**

### **Implications for school organisation as part of a phased return.**

- Pupils will work in groups of no more than 15 as recommended. **Group-sizes** will be determined by taking into account the needs of the children and the size of the room in which they will work. Wherever possible children will consistently be taught by the same staff member in order to reduce 'contact points'. **This may mean that your child will not be placed with their current teacher or based in their current classroom.**
- Groups of children (and adults) must be kept separate from each other at all times including in lessons, breaks and mealtimes wherever possible.
- In order to reduce 'contact points' the school timetable is likely to be staggered including: at the beginning and end of the school day, break times and meal times.
- Classrooms will be redesigned in order to promote safe practice. With older children this will mean an allocated table and the removal of additional furniture from classrooms. We recognise that younger children cannot be expected to remain at a desk for lengthy periods of time and so this may be managed by reducing group sizes further.
- Reduction in the number and nature of resources - particularly play-based resources for younger children - to enable regular cleaning; and the removal of other furniture and resources from classrooms.
- Whilst most lessons will follow exactly the same format as per our daily home learning lessons, the school will place an emphasis on well-being and mental health.
- Staff ratios in the Early Years will remain in place
- All previously planned gatherings (KS2 concert, Leavers' Assembly, Sports Days, Friends' events) will not take place pending further guidance
- As part of our risk assessment, it is possible that staff might follow the advice of their professional bodies and choose to wear PPE in order to manage the risk of transmissions - particularly when administering first aid or supporting intimate care
- Stringent additional hand washing and cleaning will need to take place throughout the day to help manage the risk of infection. All children will be expected to comply without exception

- Pre-school children may be allocated sessions and will not be permitted to attend an additional setting during this period.
- Children and staff who present with COVID-19 symptoms will be isolated prior to being sent home. All children and staff will be eligible for a test for COVID-19 if displaying symptoms.

### **What you should do now**

We recognise the difficult decision placed on all of our families. We hope that you understand that the information provided in this letter is not aimed at causing any additional fear or anxiety. However, we feel that it is important that we provide some additional information on how we will implement protective measures in order to keep children, families and staff as safe as we are able and how these will impact on the day to day running of the school. **It should be remembered that risk cannot be entirely removed and so it is for parents to come their own decision based upon the information that we have provided.**

In order to support us to complete our risk assessment and inform plans, we need your help. We would like **ALL** parents of children in Pre-school (beginning with children starting in reception in 2020 ), Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and those who are key workers essential to the Government's COVID-19 response who cannot make alternative childcare arrangements to complete the questionnaire on ParentApp no later than **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020**. We regret that an approach which allows pupils to attend on certain days on an ad-hoc basis may not be possible to enable us to prepare a plan which is stable, consistent and sustainable. It may also be necessary to delay the opening to a date soon after June 1<sup>st</sup> as we respond to the ever-changing picture.

Responses will be used to help decide whether/how a safe return will be determined, as we work closely with our health and safety advisors and the local authority to follow the government advice on reducing risk. We will then advise you of finalised plans as soon as we are able.

I would like to thank all parents for their cooperation and support of the school during this challenging time. Whilst, we know that home schooling in itself presents problems we are so impressed with how this has been handled. The teachers have loved receiving emails of what the children have been up to and we've enjoyed posting some examples on the website. On a personal note, thank you for trusting the school to do its best for your children.

Stay safe!

Janet Dixon  
Headteacher

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## Appendix 1: Who is 'clinically extremely vulnerable'?

Taken from '[Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable](#)' referenced from gov.uk

Expert doctors in England have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we know about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Clinically extremely vulnerable people may include the following people. Disease severity, history or treatment levels will also affect who is in the group.

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
  - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
  - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
  - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
  - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
  - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
  - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary (COPD).
4. People with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

People who fall in this group should have been contacted to tell them they are clinically extremely vulnerable.

If you're still concerned, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician.

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