



## Next steps

21<sup>st</sup> Marys 2020

Dear Parent and Carers

Following an extremely supportive Full Governing Body meeting yesterday evening, and after extensive consultation, I am now in a position to let you know what our plans are for St Mary's moving forwards into the second half of the summer term.

Our current risk assessment shows that we would not be ready to extend school provision on our site on 1<sup>st</sup> June even if the government criteria are all met. Therefore only our Skeleton School (which is our supported children care provision) will be open after half-term.

We are working hard to put in place all the prudent health and safety measures, changes to the physical environment, and changes to staffing structures that are needed in order for us to judge that it is sensible to open for further year groups (conditional upon the Government demonstrating robustly that they have met the 5 criteria they have laid out.)

These are the decisions we have made about the priorities for extending opening at St Mary's

1. We need to provide high quality supported childcare (Skeleton School) for the children of our critical workers, and for our most vulnerable children
2. We need to maintain the high quality of our distance learning provision – because the majority of children at our school will not have regular access to on-site learning this term

Once the Government have met their criteria and our own risk assessment indicates it is sensible to do so we will make gradual changes in the following order:

3. The ONLY children on site on Mondays will be those in Skeleton School (which will continue to be a 5 day provision.) *This is for two reason. The science suggests that any virus decays on surfaces very significantly over a 3 days period. It is very unsettling to get announcements over the weekend that require action on a Monday – so we are buying ourselves time to think and communicate clearly what any changes will mean for St Mary's. (Don't worry - we will provide even more cleaning the spaces used by Skeleton School)*
4. We will offer provision to Year 6 first - building up over a 2 week period to 4 days in school. *This year group is the most able to observe social distancing rules whilst inside the building. We also have significant curriculum areas, and transition work to do which we don't feel can be delivered effectively through distance learning. This will be a reduced length contact day 9.30 – 2.30. This is because when I had a video conference with a Head teacher from Denmark I learnt that all children were supervised by a very small team of adults all the time – only having a half hour break in a 5 hour day. It also allows for flexible starting points at the time when other year groups are added.*

During the second week that year 6 are in we will be assessing the feasibility of inviting some children from either year 1 or reception into school. It would be a very gradual increase. At the moment we think that the maximum offer would be a 'week on week off' rota for each class, but may well be less than this. *Skeleton school provision will continue.*

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Through all this I am also mindful of the ‘ambition’ to have all children in school before the end of the summer term. Evidently for us this would need to be ‘on site’ rather than ‘in school’ because we simply will not have the space or the staffing capacity for anything else – but it is the reason behind my caution about offering too much to the year groups named as priorities. As far as I can I will deploy people in the year teams they usually work with as this will give your children the best chance of seeing their teachers!

Despite that fact that my heart is crying out to have my wonderful staff and wonderful children back together I promise to be a Headteacher using my head! Whatever happens in the coming weeks I am determined to keep buying myself time, and avoid being railroaded into rushed decisions.

I know you will still have questions, but ask that you give us space to work through our full risk assessment. When we are in a position to publish to you, you are likely to find that many of your questions will have been answered.

You will of course remain free to make your own judgements about whether your child will access the provision on offer and I will endeavour to give you thinking time as well, and offer as much flexibility as possible.

I do have some things I would like you to do which would really help us.

## If in doubt – don’t go out

This is the only way as a society we have any chance of reducing the spread of the virus – particularly whilst we do not have a robust test, track and trace system.

Remember that it is **hand hygiene that makes the biggest difference**. The Danish Headteacher told me that they wash hands: before school, as soon as they arrive at school; every 2 hours regardless of what they are doing; before they eat; around toileting; whenever they come in from outside; before they go home.... Getting into these habits at home would be very helpful for when the children come back to school – because I think this is going to continue to be a need for a VERY long time – and it might give you all more confidence to do the next step I am asking for..

Please get out as much as you can, within the current social distancing guidelines. I need you to model to your children that it is OK to be around other people outside. I need you all to practise being around bigger groups – but interacting at a safe distance. We need to build up their confidence. We will also be spending as much of our time outside as possible when in school this summer term – so hopefully that would ease the way.

I’ve written this today because frankly I need to park all this for a little while! I want to let my hair down and enjoy the Fun Run, and then make myself stop for at least a couple of days over half-term and re-charge my batteries a bit!

I hope that you are able to do the same and I thank you all for your ongoing support.

Best wishes

Sarah Lewis

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