



## Diocese of Portsmouth

# ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

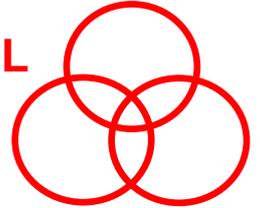
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Headteacher: Mrs M Delany-White



22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Please read the following latest update from Oxfordshire County Council to you all:

### More children possibly going to school next month

Since the start of the global pandemic, schools have responded with quiet and effective determination. Schools have not in general been closed. In Oxfordshire 94% have remained open at any one time for the children who have needed support and care, including the vulnerable children and children of key workers. Headteachers, teachers and support staff continue to work hard supporting those children in school and out of school and in some cases ensuring that families who needed it, had food. Parents and carers have been magnificent in attempting to support their children's learning while in many cases, also trying to continue to work. We recognise how patient children and young people continue to be.

The Government has decided these arrangements cannot continue indefinitely:

- Because prolonged absence from school is concerning academically, socially - and for some children, from a health, welfare, and safety perspective; and
- Because the long-term impact, particularly on the poorest families, may be damaging.

The intention is to progressively open schools more widely. Individual schools and trusts are making plans for how to open primary schools more widely from 1st June, if the conditions are right for them to do so. The Government will make the final decision when it reviews the latest scientific evidence, including transmission rates, on 28<sup>th</sup> May. Individual schools and trusts are discussing and sharing plans, as they are developed and working with staff, unions, parents, and communities.

### Government guidance and response from schools

The Government has published several sets of guidance for schools, academy trusts and local councils on this. Here is [the latest Department for Education announcement on opening schools](#). There is more information in the [government's guidance to parents and carers on reopening schools](#).

The following key points are important for parents to note:





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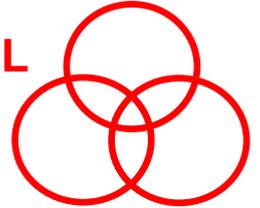
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- It is not definite that more children can go to school on 1<sup>st</sup> June so **please do not send your child to school unless you have heard from your child's school that this will be possible and what the arrangements will be.**
- Discussions continue between the government and the unions and this may lead to further guidance, which will need to be carefully considered.
- Schools are exploring ways in which the government guidance might be applied so that more children can attend school. They are also working hard to support children in their learning at home.
- Everything schools are doing needs to be guided by the best possible evidence and advice from government based on science about keeping everyone - children and school staff - as safe as possible. That is the most important consideration for Headteachers.
- Planning will take account of Government guidance. It will focus on the needs and vulnerabilities and concerns of children and parents. It will also reflect the concerns of staff (as expressed individually and through unions). If for any reason (for example, because an unusual number of staff are shielding, living with someone who is extremely vulnerable, or otherwise vulnerable themselves) it is not possible to implement opening in the way outlined in government guidance, then each school and trust will limit what it does to what is safe.
- Any new provision from June may be part time depending upon the outcome of each school's risk assessment. This may mean your child is offered a place just for morning or afternoon or just for 1 or 2 days a week, but some schools may be able to offer more.
- Schools will try to retain the original offer possibly building on that. Subsequent guidance from the government over more year groups returning to school may have an impact.

We would ask parents to understand that what works in one school may not work in another. This means that some schools will be able to welcome more children, or more year groups than others. Each child's school will act in the best interests of each child and family.

Oxfordshire Headteachers are responding positively to government guidance, are very keen to welcome more children back into school and are grateful to their colleagues and to parents for their support and understanding.

*Jane Portman* (Interim Director of Children's Services)

*Chris Hilliard* (Consultant Deputy Director Children's Services - Education)

for Oxfordshire County Council





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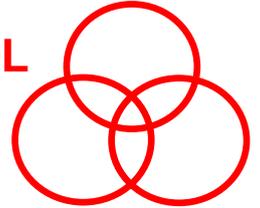
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As you know, last week I asked all parents of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to complete a questionnaire indicating whether they would potentially want their child to return to school after half term. Where many of you wrote specific questions on this form I or Mrs Demarchi have called you and tried to answer your questions to the best of our ability, against a constantly changing set of guidance from the government. Many of you share our concerns about whether this is the right thing to be doing at the moment or are wondering whether we should still be waiting a few more weeks for the R rate to come down further. All we can do is plan and risk assess given the information we have currently and wait to hear the Prime Minister's next announcement on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May, which may require us to change or delay our plans.

We have now completed our risk assessment which I will put on our website next week, once it has had full governor approval.

Now that we have a better idea of possible numbers for each year group, and following individual conversations with each member of staff, we have arranged the children who will be returning to school in discrete groups which we are referring to as 'bubbles', with one teacher and one teaching assistant assigned to each bubble. The children in these bubbles will return to school on **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June** (unless the Prime Minister suggests otherwise during his announcement next Thursday) therefore, **the current key worker group only will be in school from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June- Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June**. Please remember school is completely closed next week for half term and on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June for the planned INSET day.

All staff, who are well enough to do so, will return to school full time from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June to prepare the classrooms, play areas, procedures and the recovery curriculum ready for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June. The parents of the children who are in each bubble will receive a detailed breakdown of our new procedures, start and end of day, staffing for that bubble only, etc. in advance of 8<sup>th</sup> June. We will be offering those children full time from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June (though some parents have chosen to start with just a few days a week for their child to begin with, which is absolutely fine). As I stated previously, you will not be pressurised to send your child into school if they are in Nursery, Reception or Year 1 as you must decide what is best for you and your child. The teachers of all year groups will continue to provide weekly home learning for all those children who are not coming in to school. However, the planning for Nursery, Reception and Year 1 will be more streamlined as those teachers will be planning for and teaching children full time in school from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June.

As the return to school is dependent on the staff and space available in our school and the needs of the key worker and vulnerable children first, it has meant that we are not able to offer a place to all of the Year 6 children who wanted one. I know this will be disappointing for some of the Year 6 children and their parents who have already expressed their wish to return to school and for this I am truly sorry but we have had to prioritise according to government guidance. The only Year 6 children who will be able to return to school from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June will be key worker/vulnerable children and they will make a new bubble





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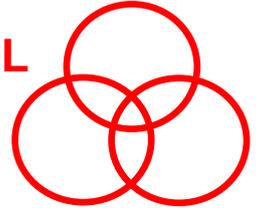
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with key worker/vulnerable children from Year 5. We will also now have a key worker/vulnerable bubble of Year 3 & 4 children, a key worker/vulnerable bubble of Year 2 children plus bubbles of Year 1, Reception and Nursery children.

I hope this all makes sense! Do look out for the letter and risk assessment if your child is in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or is one of our key worker groups. Then contact me after half term via the school office if you have any questions. **Please do not send your child into school unless you receive one of these letters.**

Have a lovely half term break and I look forward to seeing many of you again soon.

Yours sincerely,

*Mrs Delany-White*

Headteacher

