



## Abbey School

*an academy within Nexus MAT*

Little Common Lane, Kimberworth, Rotherham, S61 2RA

Tel: 01709 740074

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[www.abbeyschool.co](http://www.abbeyschool.co)    [www.nexusMAT.org](http://www.nexusMAT.org)

Executive Headteacher: Mrs. Luci Windle

Head of School: Mr Wayne Askham



**INSPIRE...BELIEVE...ACHIEVE**

12.5.2020

Colleagues,

### Re-opening of school

On Sunday 10 May 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Government's road map for easing the lockdown measures put in place since March, which included the proposal for schools to re-open for more pupils from 1 June 2020.

On the evening of Monday 11 May 2020, the Department for Education issued detailed guidance for schools to re-open. Primary schools have been asked to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups. Special schools are encouraged to bring more children back into school, without specific year groups being defined.

Schools have been issued with updated advice on implementing a range of protective measures, including increased cleaning, reducing 'pinch points' (such as parents dropping children off at the start and end of day), and utilising outdoor space. Staff and pupils in all settings will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their households.

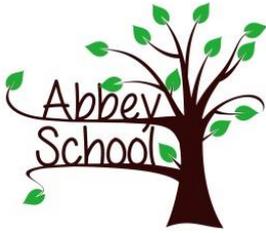
We are therefore working towards welcoming back as many children as can be safely catered for in school, from 1 June.

Letters have gone to families so we can gauge their intent, which in turn allows us to understand what this means for staffing deployment. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels, so we are unsure how many more parents will want their child to attend school from 1 June.

At this time, the Government have not confirmed schools will definitely re-open on this date, but we have been asked to plan for this and the Government will – based on the scientific evidence available – confirm this closer to the time.

Children, young people and staff who have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. We do not expect people in this category to be attending school, and they will continue to be supported to learn or work at home as much as possible. A child/young person or a member of staff who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend school. The Government have issued more detailed guidance on these definitions on their website, so please review this or discuss any questions you have with a member of the senior leadership team if you are unsure of what to do. We may need to seek further advice, so please bear with us.





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There have been a number of queries from staff about the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in schools. The most recent Government guidance states:

Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings. Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings.

Naturally, where we use aprons and gloves to undertake intimate care of children, this will continue to be our approach, alongside rigorous infection control measures.

Government guidance is for class sizes to be reduced to help enhance the potential for social distancing, and that is what we will be adopting. Whilst we will do all we can to ensure social distancing is maintained, it is not something that can be guaranteed at all times in any school. To mitigate this risk, we will endeavour to ensure that:

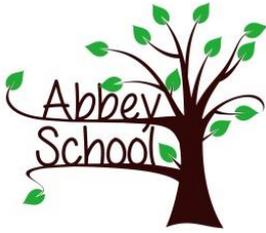
- Pupils are in the same small groups at all times each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day, or on subsequent days;
- Staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, these stay the same during the day and on subsequent days, recognising for secondary aged pupils they may be subject specialist rotation of staff;
- Wherever possible pupils use the same classroom or area of a setting throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day.

The Prime Minister was really clear on Sunday that workplaces should start to open up again, and the Government have continually stated that schools are safe places to be. As state schools, we are legally bound to follow Government direction, and we continue to put our trust in the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Science Officer, which is driving decision making in the Government. However, we also know that the announcement on Sunday has left many people confused, and some of the guidance can feel contradictory.

Families have been asked to confirm their intentions with school by Friday 15 May 2020. This then gives us the chance to review demand, plan for the re-opening of school for more pupils, and communicate this to families with plenty of notice.

A key part of that planning process will be our talking to staff to understand how we can continue to provide the most balanced and compassionate offer we can for families and our workforce. Nobody is immune to the worry and concern this pandemic has caused and we know this change in Government policy – without a vaccine available – will be a source of further worry for many of you. As we have throughout this crisis, we encourage any staff member worried or concerned to talk to the senior leadership team so that we can work through this, together.





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What we know with certainty is that – if schools open from 1 June – it will not be “business as usual” and we will continue to have low, manageable pupil numbers in school with a need for a reduced workforce presence. This gives us the chance to make incremental steps rather than wholesale change, whilst we continually follow updated Government advice and work together with staff and families to do the best we can.

Luci will arrange a class team zoom meeting for each team later today so that we can talk through as a team these next steps.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.

Yours faithfully,

Luci Windle

Executive Headteacher

Warren Carratt

Chief Executive Officer

