



## 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**

4.5.2020

Dear Families,

I hope this letter find you safe and well. As you are all aware since Tuesday this week we have started to slowly reopen school. I'm pleased to report this is going well albeit we are only on the first week. I know many of you have questions about what is happening in terms of returning to school so we have put together a list of frequently asked questions that families have to keep the process of reopening school as clear and transparent as possible.

### **When can my child return to school?**

We are working alongside families to open the school slowly to ensure it is kept as safe as possible. This means some children can return sooner than others. We wrote to families to ask what this might look like for them and also telephoned asking if a place was required. This helped us plan for the need that we had. We hope to continue opening bit by bit to other children dependent upon need and safety considerations.

### **My child has an EHCP, the Government say they should be in school?**

This is correct, however the guidance states that when a child attends a special school it should be on a case by case decision. Most of our children fall into a category whereby they do not rely on school for specialist medical support so would have their needs met more safely at home during the pandemic. Every child has had their EHCP risk assessed to see if there is anything in there that requires specialist input such as medical intervention this is then checked by the Local Authority and challenged where needed.

### **Why are there a mixture of children in school already?**

Children who have parents who are 'key workers' from roles identified in the Government list were offered emergency placements in school. Some of these places were not taken up so we were able to offer the places to a wider group of families.

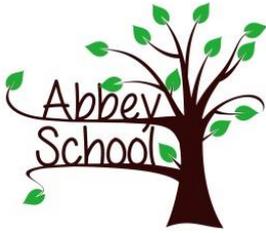
### **Why are some children back in school full time and others are part time?**

We gave each family the choice to send their child back on the days they wanted. Some families felt they only needed a couple of days provision whereas others wanted full time education.

### **What does a school day look like at the moment?**

School looks very different to what you would normally see. All the children who are physically in school are based on corridor 1. (turn left from reception) This is because we have sinks and toilets in these classrooms so children don't have to leave the classroom area throughout the day. On sunny days we try to get children outside as the risk to them from covid-19 is significantly less. If the weather isn't great the children spend the day in the classroom, this includes dinnertime and breaks. The children follow their online curriculum which their class are following at home.





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### Why does my child have to sit at a desk when normally they can learn as they want to?

During this time we have to follow Government guidance which states that children should have access to their own seating space, equipment and resources. It also states that we shouldn't be passing equipment between children and that equipment should be frequently wiped down throughout the day.

### Why aren't the classrooms highly decorated and immersive.?

Unfortunately the guidance states that we have had to limit the amount of equipment in the classrooms and that fabric or soft furnishings should be removed during this time.

### What are the children learning?

Children are using the same online curriculum offered as this is unique to each of the classes and allows the class team to be able to give children feedback on any learning they do.

### Will online learning still continue?

Online learning will continue for all the children until the end of the half term – 17<sup>th</sup> July. We will keep the online content up over the Summer holiday in case any families have found it is helpful with routines etc. However it won't be added to during the summer holiday.

### If my child came back to school would they be with their normal class team?

It is highly likely that the team of staff your child will be with if they return at the moment won't be their usual class team. This is due to some staff having to stay home themselves for a variety of health conditions. We do wherever possible put lower school staff with younger children but this is dependent on the amount of staff that we have.

### What is a 'bubble' approach?

A 'bubble' is a way in which we describe a class at the moment. Where possible we try to keep bubbles of children together with staff who are changed weekly. This gives us opportunity to easily track any potential outbreak that may occur.

### If my child returns will they be with their friends?

The bubbles are very mixed, although we do try to keep age ranges together to ensure we keep the bubbles appropriate.

### Why do I still get a phone call every week?

The phone call you receive from the class team is a 'wellbeing' phone call to check your child is ok and that you have the resources you need. It's also an opportunity for staff to signpost you to any agencies that may be able to help you during this time.

### Should the staff be wearing face masks and other protective equipment?

The current Government advice as per this letter date, is that staff do not need PPE (personal protective equipment) in schools other than what we would use normally for personal care and first aid.





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### **Why cant all the children come back to school as normal? If the shops are open why isn't the school open to all the children?**

Currently it is viewed by the Government that although schools are safe for children we have to adhere to the social distancing rules. This means children and staff stay 2 metres apart from each other at all times. This is extremely challenging for most schools in terms of staffing and physical space but we also have to risk assess our children's needs and their understanding of keeping 2 metres apart to make it as safe as possible for all.

### **What is 'outreach'?**

Outreach is an option we have used for our most vulnerable children who we feel need to be in school but due to their vulnerabilities, behaviour etc can't be in school. Staff attend the house of these students with some additional work or resources that families may need to keep them safe at home.

### **I am worried about my child missing out socially from their friends if they aren't in school, what do I do?**

Government guidance states that you are able to meet socially in groups of 6 as long as social distancing measures can be adhered to. Children at home can socialise using purple mash where they can email any member of the school community safely. Staff have to approve these emails where they may cause a concern.

### **Does school consider the 'r' rate alongside Government advice for local areas and whether it is safe for children to come into school?**

The 'r' rate is a term that the Government use to describe the rate in which Covid-19 Coronavirus is spreading. The data that they use, available on the internet shows what each areas, town, community r rate is. For some schools this is a great way to consider opening the schools wider however due to the distance that special schools cover it is not a reliable enough factor for us to take into consideration.

### **Why have some Local Authorities said it isn't safe to open their schools but other authorities have?**

This is because some Local Authorities view the 'r' rate of their area too high meaning the spread of the virus is increasing. Other Authorities feel that the Government's 5 key indicators have not been met so it is not safe to open their schools.

### **I'm worried that my child is falling behind academically.**

Staff at Abbey are experts in finding where children have missing parts of their education and plug those gaps so children will make up for any loss progress that may have occurred. What this time has given you is opportunity to work on the personal learning and thinking skills such as teamwork, communication skills, IT skills, independent thinking skills. Not least the cooking skills that children will have mastered over this time. Learning will have taken place but it will be different learning all of which will make our children more rounded individuals overall.

### **Will school be open over the summer holidays?**

We have no plans to open the school over the holidays.

### **When will I know who my child's new classteacher is?**

You will know in the next couple of weeks. You will also receive a courtesy call from the new classteacher.





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### What will happen in September?

We are planning to open as usual from September as there is currently no advice or guidance on this from the Government. You will know that children will return to school in their current class and transitions will take place in the second and third week to ensure that children have a good start to the new school year. If the Government advises against this we will of course update you.

### I'm struggling to cope with my child at home, I need help?

Please don't struggle alone during this time. School are only a phone call away and we can support with any of your needs. This may be involving other agencies or charity group but we are here to help in whatever way we can.

### If everyone wanted to send their child to school, what would you do?

Currently we do not have a safe option for all children to return to school. The Government guidance still remains that it is safer for the vast majority of children to stay at home. If everyone was wishing to return we would have to use the mainstream criteria whereby key groups of children are given a place. This may seem slightly unfair at times but it would be made on a case by case decision.

### How many children are in school now?

Currently we have 20 children on various different placement offers in school.

### How do you manage social distancing?

Social distancing is very challenging for every school even more so when children have additional needs. We are using the 'bubble' approach and have identified outdoor and indoor classroom space for children and staff to remain in throughout the school day. This is challenging in the sense that children do not have the freedoms to move around school as they would normally do.

### How do the children travel to school?

Children are travelling to and from school via their normal school transport. The transport isn't organised in the school bubbles due to the distance between where children live.

### What happens about snacks and lunch?

Currently children have a packed lunch from home or from school for lunch. We offer fruit for a snack but there is no breakfast club provision from 8.30-9am. Dinner and breaks are either outside (weather dependent) at structured times or inside the classrooms.

### If my child or another child goes into crisis, how will you handle this?

Every child that returns to school during this time has their own personal risk assessment that looks at the potential risk that going into crisis would cause to others. Where this risk is viewed to be too high we would advise that the child remains at home to learn.





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### **Can sensory spaces still be used?**

Currently sensory spaces aren't used due to the cleaning of these spaces. We do have sensory toys in the classrooms at each of the learning spaces.

### **If my child does come to school will they be able to walk around to familiarise themselves with the school again?**

Currently our risk assessments only allow the children in school who are coming in to be educated. We intend to delay the start of the new school year into the next one whereby children will go back into the class they are already in then transition in the second week.

### **Who does the cleaning and how often?**

Cleaning occurs through the day where staff wipe surfaces, door handles and high usage areas and everyone washed their hands. Classrooms that have been used are cleaned by the maintenance staff each night.

### **What happens if someone shows symptoms of the virus?**

If anyone shows symptoms we will send them home and encourage them to have a test. If the test is positive we would inform that class bubble immediately. It is the expectation that the bubble will stay at home or have a test in the coming days.

### **Do the teachers have access to being tested?**

Government guidance states that anyone can be tested for Covid-19 now. However the test to see whether someone has had the virus is only available for NHS staff currently. We hope that the new Test, Trach and Trace app will support school reopening safely in the future.

