

Emmbrook Junior School Newsletter

Friday 26th February 2021

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Message from Mr Usher



As per the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday of this week, **face to face learning for all pupils will recommence on Monday the 8th of March**. We are looking forward to welcoming back all of our children and have been working hard preparing for their return.

No doubt there are many parents and carers who are very pleased that their children will be returning to school, not only for educational reasons, but also for the children's mental health and well-being. **There will also be many of you who are still deeply concerned about the chances of transmission of the virus.** Despite the numbers of infections going down nationally we have decided, following advice from Wokingham Borough Council, that we must enhance and strengthen our control measures as much as possible. If we look back at the numbers (in terms of cases, hospital admissions and deaths) at the start of September, they were much lower than they are now, but once we moved out of that lockdown the numbers moved steadily up until we were forced back into lockdown again. This time should be different as the vaccine is rolled out (nearly a third of the adult population has already had the vaccine) but that does not mean we should have less stringent controls in place. We will be publishing our risk assessment via our website early next week. **The main enhancement, along with twice weekly testing for staff, is that we are moving from year group bubbles to class bubbles.** There are more details about how these bubbles will work in this newsletter, however I am aware that while many parents will be pleased that we are making our controls more secure, there will be others who are disappointed that their children may not be able to socialise with all their chosen friends who may be in other classes or year groups. We have conferred with staff and governors regarding this decision and firmly believe that it is right to proceed on this basis, not only to balance the anxieties of parents and staff, but to reduce the numbers of children who could have to return to remote learning in the event that we have an identified case of Covid-19 in school.

We will of course do our utmost to ensure that the emotional needs and well-being of as many children as possible are met as well as assessing their learning needs to identify what areas of learning need to be revisited, revised or retaught. We will continually review our plans and will update our risk assessment at Easter considering both the needs of the children and the situation both locally and nationally.

As always, I thank you for your patience and understanding at this time. I hope you all have a pleasant weekend.

Class Bubbles

From the 8th of March we will be enhancing our mitigation controls by moving from the previous year group bubble system to class bubbles. This system, while being more restrictive, will ensure that should a case of Covid-19 occur the fewest number of children (and staff) possible will be impacted. **All children and staff will**



be allocated to a class bubble (their usual class). These bubbles should not interact at any point throughout the school day including break times and lunchtimes. There is obviously potential for children to cross bubbles outside of the school day with siblings and friends, however within the school day we are able to keep bubbles secure. The only exception to this will be Mr Fisher, who will continue to deliver PE sessions outside while remaining socially distant. The children will be escorted to their outdoor PE session by a member of staff from their bubble.

This does mean that some children will have no contact with some of their year group peers during the school day. We are aware that this may have an impact on the well-being of some children and so staff within each bubble will be monitoring the children and ensuring appropriate nurture provision is in place. As mentioned, we feel that this is an important step to take in order to reduce both parental and staff anxieties about the return to full face to face learning. All aspects of the risk assessment will be monitored and reviewed.

Start and End of Day Procedures

From **Monday the 8th of March** we will be reverting to the system we had in place at the start of the year. For all children we will be operating a soft start to the day with **gates open from 8:30am and closing at 8:50am** sharp. Children will be able to go directly to their classrooms and avoid any unnecessary queuing. This will also allow any parents that need to drop off children at the Infant School to adhere to their staggered start times without having to worry about dropping off siblings at a specific time at the Junior School.

The one-way system in place will allow children to be left at the green gates at the Junior playground where they will be able to enter the school via specific entrances.

Year 3 children should enter through their own classroom doors.

Year 4 children should walk around to the Year 4 corridor and enter their classrooms separately.

Year 5 children will be able to enter their classrooms directly via the doors facing the school field.

Year 6 children should enter through the main doors through to the courtyard area where they will be able to enter their own classrooms separately.

At the end of the day we ask Year 3 parents and carers to wait (socially distanced) behind the stars on the playground for the children to exit their classrooms and come up via the steps.

Year 4 children will walk across the field (depending on the weather) and should be collected from the far end of the playground.

Year 5 children may walk home alone with parental permission. If you have given this permission before then you do NOT need to do so again. If you are prepared to allow your Year 5 child to walk home alone and have not previously given permission, please email the year group directly. If you would prefer to collect your child they will be released from their classrooms to the canopy covered end of the playground.

Year 6 children may continue walk home alone with parental permission. If you have given this permission before then you do NOT need to do so again. If you are prepared to allow your Year 6 child to walk home alone and have not previously given permission, please email the year group directly. If you would prefer to collect your child then the Year 6 waiting area is opposite the main entrance/exit from the courtyard. Please wait inside this area separate from other parents.

One-way System & Conduct on Site

The previous **one-way system will be in operation at both the start and end of the day.** The site managers will be on the gates and may remind you at times to please stick to the one-way system using the indicated entrances and exits. They may also remind you about face coverings on site but they will not be challenging parents who choose not to wear one. However, **it is a requirement that all adults coming on and off our site wear a face covering.** Staff will also be wearing face coverings within school when working with children or other adults. We have been very pleased that the majority of parents have followed this request and we hope it continues upon our return.

It is important that we **keep the area between the green playground gates (in front of the Year 3 classrooms) as clear as possible** to allow the flow of people on and off the site as quickly and safely as possible, so please ensure that you are waiting in the correct place for your children at the end of the day.

If you need to speak to a teacher or member of staff please make an appointment via the office. It may seem like a quick chat but it can cause a back up and increase chances of transmission. We will be keeping the year group email addresses open so that you can contact staff regarding smaller issues. We're aware that it is tempting and socially desirable to chat and catch up with other parents and carers, we only ask that you do this while **maintaining a social distance of 2m.** It is not possible to legislate for good manners and we simply ask that everyone treat each other with all due consideration.

Uniform & Equipment

When the children return to school we need them **to bring with them any and all school equipment and books** that they may have taken home for remote learning. This includes all the books they have recorded their work in. Teachers will be using these as part of their assessments. **Power Maths books, exercise books, equipment wallets and folders should all be brought back into school** and taken to your child's classroom with them.

If the school loaned you any ICT equipment (laptops/tablets) these must be returned to school on Monday the 8th of March. Children can take these to their classrooms with them where they will be checked in by the staff. If you were allocated a data SIM – this does not need to be returned but all other **laptops must be returned to the school** so they can be sanitized and then used within the school.

Children should wear their usual school uniform; however as increasing ventilation is an integral part of our risk assessment, the majority of doors and windows will be open during the school day. This may mean that classrooms are colder than usual and so if your child prefers to wear an additional jumper or fleece in order to keep warm this will be allowed. We only ask that these additional layers are as plain as possible. Hopefully as we move towards summer this will become less of an issue.

Children in Years 3 & 4 should continue to bring their PE kits into school as usual. They will continue to change for PE in their classrooms as they have previously. This system has the advantage that should staff wish to be more flexible with the days on which PE happens the kits are available.

Year 5 and 6 children will be required to wear their PE kits to school on the days that they have PE. Teachers will be in contact to let you know which days those will be. This is so that children don't have to switch classrooms in order to get changed for PE as girls and boys in Years 5 & 6 have done previously. This does have the added bonus of less time being lost to changing and more time being given to physical activity.

A Department for Education spokesperson has said: "Children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings when they return to school from 8 March." We will not be asking children to wear face coverings of any kind in school, however, **should you wish your child to wear a mask we would have no objection** although this is not something that staff will be monitoring or checking unless the masks become a distraction from learning.

Breaks & Lunchtime

Class bubbles will be maintained throughout the school day including break times and lunchtimes. This means that children who may expect to interact with siblings or friends during these times will not be able to do so. **Each class will be allocated to a specific area outside at breaktime and lunchtime to enjoy with their classmates.** We are aware this may seem strange given that they could be interacting with other children outside their bubbles when not in school, however we are only in a position to protect the integrity of bubbles within the school day and again this means that should a case of Covid-19 be identified within the school, a far smaller number of children would be required to isolate. Again, we're aware that this may cause consternation or disappointment for some parents but for many it will provide increased reassurance.

Lunches (School Meals)

We have requested a hot packed lunch option from our caterers for those children wishing to purchase a school meal and those entitled to free school meals from the 8th of March. We have been told this should not

be problem and are awaiting final confirmation. **Once we have a menu it will be sent out directly in the usual way.**

We are aware that this is different from the Infant school who will be operating another system for their lunches, however, we feel this option will enable us to keep our bubbles secure with the majority of children eating in their classrooms. This will avoid the issue of cross contamination and transmission of the virus within the hall. **It will also allow us to ensure that children have at least 30 minutes to eat and a further 30 minutes to enjoy some free time outdoors.** We are told that the hot packed lunches will be delivered in secure reusable boxes (not unlike airline meals) that will enable us to safely deliver them to classes and also (hopefully) have a lesser environmental impact. Once we have final confirmation from the catering company we will share the details via ScoPay.

Wrap Around Care

The Willows aftercare provision will run from Monday to Thursday from the 8th of March. Parents who normally use The Willows should have been contacted directly by the aftercare team. If you have not been contacted or would like your child to go to aftercare please **contact The Willows via the Infant school.**

We have been informed that currently the number families requiring Breakfast Club do not make it financially viable and so it will not be running for the moment.

Remote Learning Survey

Thank you to all those parents and carers (of children doing remote learning) for completing the survey we sent out this week. Apologies for any issues with the survey, we hope these have all been addressed now and you are able to share with us how remote learning has gone for your children. **These surveys will close at 9am on Friday the 5th of March** and are a really useful way of sharing how your child has engaged with the remote learning provision that has been in place.

Whole School Assembly

There will be a whole school assembly for both children in school and those at home on Friday the 5th of March via Teams. Class Teachers will send out invitations to their classes so hopefully they should appear in your child's calendar. **Attendance is not compulsory** but we will be using the assembly to go through some of the changes that the children will find from the 8th and we will also share our expectations for all children upon everyone's return. Teams meetings should allow for up to 300 participants which means everyone should be able to get into the meeting. **We will ask that everyone keeps microphones off and not use the chat function during the assembly please.**

At Emmbrook Junior School we are:

