



# Birches First School

## Believe, Grow, Succeed

29th May 2020

Dear Parents,

Further to the Government's announcement last night and a meeting of our Trust Board yesterday, I am now able to confirm that Birches First School will be increasing our provision from Monday 8th June to include children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1.

Childcare provision for Key Worker children and vulnerable children will continue for week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June (Please ensure you have booked a place for your child by emailing [jferretti@birches.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:jferretti@birches.staffs.sch.uk) – confirmation emails will be sent today – if you haven't received one by tomorrow but require childcare next week please contact me.)

I can confirm that this decision for wider opening has been made by our CMAT Board of Directors. They were satisfied that the necessary steps have been completed and actioned in line with guidance to ensure that the return to school is as safe as possible. Over the next week we will continue our preparations for welcoming some children back to school on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> of June. Staff training will be carried out during this time to ensure that all members of the team understand the new procedures and measures. The Directors will continue to monitor the situation and should the national picture change significantly, this will be taken into account and the situation reviewed.

Please see below a summary of the proposed provision;

Children will be allocated to a group of 15 children (a bubble). The children and staff in this bubble will remain consistent as far as is possible.

Bubbles will be based in the same room each day. They will also eat lunch in this room. Time outdoors will be encouraged as much as possible.

Each child will be allocated their own workstation and set of resources which should not be shared.

Children in Early Years bubbles (Nursery and Reception) will still access an Early Years environment (indoor and outdoor) – albeit a highly adapted one.

Social distancing will be encouraged. However, we **cannot guarantee** that children will not come into close contact. It is very likely they will. We will promote a 'no touch' rule.

Children will complete the home learning tasks that continue to be set for children who remain at home.

Bubbles will have allocated arrival, play, lunch and collection times. (It is essential that parents are punctual and ensure children arrive and are collected on time.)

Bubbles will have designated toilets and sinks and only one child at a time should go to the toilet. Adults will supervise handwashing.

Children can bring a packed lunch or order a school prepared packed lunch (£2.40 for Nursery and Key Worker Year 3 and Year 4 children, free of charge for children in Reception, Year 1 and Key Worker Year 2 children (Infant Free School Meals) and those eligible for Free School Meals.

Heightened cleaning regimes will be adhered to.

Children will attend school every day. Key worker children have the flexibility to attend only when their parents are at work if this is their wish.

We are currently unable to confirm whether we will be able to offer before and after school care – this is subject to staffing capacity (as children and staff cannot be combined in different groups before or after school.) I will update parents further when I am able to do so. Should before and after school care be possible, it will be offered to **Key Worker children only**.

As you are aware from previous communications, we do not have the capacity for every child to return to school. We also understand that some parents are exercising their right to choose to keep their child at home and we respect this decision. We recently carried out a survey asking parents to confirm whether or not they wished their child to return to school once reopening happens. We are able to offer a place to all children whose parents have confirmed they would like to attend via this second survey. If you no longer require the place for your child please notify me by email [jferretti@birches.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:jferretti@birches.staffs.sch.uk) as soon as possible so that they can be removed from the list.

If you **did not** indicate that you would like your child to return but now wish them to, we may be able to accommodate you. Again, please contact me as soon as possible to request a place. Again, due to the measures and procedures that have been required, unfortunately we cannot guarantee a place will be available.

I would like to clarify that you cannot “reserve” a place for your child. We will have to organise the pupils into groups and these “bubbles” must remain as stable as possible. We will have to maximise the numbers in each group to 15 to ensure we can organise staff and rooms.

Should you confirm attendance and your child does not attend on the 8th, I cannot guarantee that “bubble” in the future. You can of course request a place at any time before the end of the term. We will require at least 24 hours notice of any request and as mentioned we cannot guarantee future availability. Much will depend on initial uptake and subsequent availability of staff and appropriate rooms.

I’d also like to remind parents that whilst we will endeavour to place children with familiar staff and in familiar rooms, this is dependant of the availability of staff and spaces and as such cannot be guaranteed. There is a possibility that some ‘bubbles’ may mix children from different year groups in order for us to accommodate as many children as possible.

We ask that in sending their child back to school, parents do so with the understanding that the required measures mean that school will be a very different place. Parents and children should be prepared for this. Staff will do all they can (as always) to support and reassure the children but this must be done at a distance and they will not be able to comfort them in the usual ways (taking a hand and leading a child into class for example). Staff will find this incredibly difficult as it is in our nature to nurture and care for the children.

I must reiterate that the ultimate decision whether or not your child should return to school rests with parents. You know your child and your circumstances best and it is for parents to decide what is appropriate for their child. I do not underestimate how difficult this decision may be for some families. I hope the information and communication thus far has supported you in making this decision.

I will be sharing final plans, information and arrangements with you in due course to support you and your child in preparing for the return to school. As I said, things will be very different for the children (and for parents) - this is necessary to ensure we are taking every possible step to keep the school community as safe as possible.

Thank you for your continued support and patience during this time. I hope we soon find ourselves in a situation where we can welcome many more children back to school.

Best wishes

Mrs J Ferretti

Acting Headteacher