



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed



20th May 2020

Dear parents,

Early last week we started formulating plans for potential reopening, based on what we knew at the time and what we considered would be the most effective approaches for our children, staff and parents. In my FAQ I presented 3 potential scenarios for a wider reopening; a full-time return, a part time return (attending mornings or afternoons) and a part time return with children attending 2 days a week. Our parent survey last week helped us to gauge parent opinion about the potential return. Thank you to those parents who took the time to complete it. However, since sending out our parent survey last week, the Government began to publish further guidance as to how schools can/should implement a wider reopening and what measures should be considered. The guidance states that schools **should not** offer a return on a rota (part time) basis. Therefore, our reopening model is based on children returning full time (with staggered start and finish times.) Children with a 30 hour Nursery place are able to stay all day. 15 hour Nursery children will attend mornings only.

The Government has stated that schools should organise children in groups of no more than 15 children and **where possible**;

-children and staff in these groups should remain consistent

-workstations should be adequately spaced so as to allow a 2 metre distance between children.

At Birches we have 41 children in Nursery, 30 in Reception and 31 in Year 1. Total 102 children.

We have 6 classrooms plus the hall = 7 spaces.

We must ensure we have adequate provision for Key Worker / vulnerable children so must allocate 2 of these spaces to childcare provision (spaces for 30 children).

This leaves 5 spaces across school.

5 rooms with 15 children in each = 75 children.

However, we only have the staffing capacity currently to staff a total of 6 spaces – with 2 childcare provision spaces this leaves adequate staffing for 4 spaces. This means that in order to remain within the Government's recommended guidelines, we can operate;

4 rooms with a maximum of 15 children in each = 60 children (out of a potential 102).

As you will see, it is unfortunately not possible for us to offer a space to every child in Nursery, Reception and Year 1. We are aware that not all children will be returning to school, with some parents opting to keep them at home. To help us finalise our plans and groupings, a new survey will be coming out to parents of children in Nursery, Reception and

Year 1 asking you to confirm whether or not you intend for your child to return to school from Tuesday 2nd June. In line with Government guidance, should numbers exceed capacity, we will look to offering places to children according to the following criteria;

- 1 Key worker / vulnerable children in Nursery, Reception or Year 1 (parents should still complete the survey, even if children are already accessing childcare provision).
- 2 Other children in Reception and Nursery.
- 3 Other children in Year 1

It may be the case that not all places are filled at the beginning of June and children may then be able to join at a late date. However, once any remaining spaces are filled, our capacity would then be reached. This would mean that we would no longer be able to admit additional children due to Government guidance and the limitations of the school's facilities (toilets, access) as well as staffing capacity.

Our current plan for reopening is therefore structured in the following way;

1 childcare provision group based in the hall (likely to be Y2/3 children)

1 childcare provision group based in Year 4 classroom (the mobile) (likely to be Y3/4 children)

1 group – based in the Nursery classroom

1 group –based in the Reception classroom

1 group –based in the Year 1 classroom

1 group –based in the Year 3 classroom

Each group will form a 'bubble'. To minimise risk of transmission, each bubble will be staffed by the same members of the team (as far as is possible) – a teacher and a teaching assistant (if part time, 2 TAs will team up to support one bubble) and will have the same children in. Some bubbles will also be supported by a Lunchtime Supervisor in the middle of the day. Bubbles may be made up with children from more than one year group, depending on numbers. The bubble will be based in one, consistent space in school and have allocated arrival, play, lunch and collection times. Bubbles will complete home learning tasks in their classroom with the possibility of some additional tasks too. A main priority for staff however, will be to try and support children's emotional wellbeing and to encourage observance of the safety measures. Lunches will be delivered to classrooms where children will eat. Bubbles will spend as much (socially distanced) time outdoors as possible. Regular cleaning will take place during the day to promote the safety of all.

Please note that it cannot be guaranteed that your child will be taught by their own teacher. While we will try to bear in mind friendships etc, there are many factors that will need to be considered when placing children in their groups so we cannot guarantee this.

I would like to remind parents that the Government have said that schools will only reopen if five 'key tests' are met before the 1st of June. Recent headlines suggest that on Thursday 28th May the Government will make an announcement as to whether wider opening will begin from the start of June.

Monday June 1st is a planned Inset day for Birches. As I am sure you will understand, there are some arrangements that cannot be finalised until we have confirmation of opening from

the Government. Staff will also require detailed briefing and training on the safety procedures being implemented before we welcome any children back. This will be carried out on Monday 1st June. Therefore, if wider opening from June 1st does go ahead, we will reopen to children on Tuesday June 2nd. This is to ensure all staff feel as confident as possible in our efforts to minimise risk to children and staff as much as we can.

Childcare provision will still be available on Monday 1st June **at Birches** for those eligible parents who need it. (Key Worker/vulnerable child – to be booked with Mrs Ferretti in the usual way).

It is our intention to provide parents with further information in a 'Reopening Guide' as well as providing information for children to support them as much as possible in the transition back to school and to ensure they have an understanding of what things might be like and what will be expected of them.

As mentioned previously, we ask that ALL parents of children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 complete the online survey (link will be sent by text) promptly and no later than 6pm on Friday 22nd May. I appreciate that this is soon and for some parents, this may not be an easy decision. However, we do require numbers in order for us to finalise plans and allocate available places based on which children wish to return to school.

We are also asking our Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 Key Worker parents and parents of vulnerable children to complete an additional survey informing us of your childcare requirements from June. This will enable us to ensure we have made adequate provision for childcare within our plans.

If parents do not complete the survey it will be assumed you do not require a place.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that as a school, we are not able to guarantee that school is safe for children to return to. The decision as to whether children are safe to return will be made by the Government with the support of their advisors who have the necessary scientific and medical skill and understanding in order to make such a decision. This decision is dependent on the achievement of the five 'key tests' previously mentioned. I can guarantee however, that Government guidance will be adhered to as far as possible and where this is unworkable in our setting, we will seek to mitigate risk. The Government guidance we receive is continually evolving and therefore our plans are subject to change. We are in the process of finalising our risk assessment for reopening in partnership with our trust. This risk assessment will be shared with the Codsall Multi Academy Trust Board who will discuss and scrutinise measures. Once the risk assessment has been ratified by the Board, I will share it with parents.

Many thanks for your continued support and understanding during this incredibly difficult and uncertain time. Assuring you of our commitment to the safety, care and education of all our Birches children as well as the safety and wellbeing of all our staff and families.

Best wishes

Mrs J Ferretti

Acting Headteacher