



Birches First School

Believe, Grow, Succeed

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Plans for full opening in September 2020.

As you will be aware, the Government have announced that all children will make a return to education in September. Guidance has now been released outlining the measures schools must have in place for such as return.

Using the DFE and PHE guidance, we have been working on a plan which we believe will support the safety of our children as we return from lockdown. The principles that underpin this plan are set out as:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

How contacts are reduced ...will (as much as possible) include:

- grouping children together
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff as much as possible

A thorough review of our rigorous risk assessment will be carried out and necessary amendments made.

Please see below an outline of the proposed provision for Birches.

Children in Years 1 – 4 return to school on **Wednesday 2nd September**. New starters to Reception and Nursery will begin according to the induction arrangements and dates shared with parents in their recent information packs.

Organisation of groups and classrooms.

Children will return to their year group classes, forming new bubbles of 30 children. In line with guidance, there may be times when it will be necessary for two bubbles will be combined to create a 'Key Stage bubble' (for example, children in Year 1 and Year 2 going out to play at the same time and sharing the outdoor space.)

Classrooms will be reorganised to minimise unnecessary close contact between children (social distancing however is not required). Tables in Year 2-4 classrooms will be forward facing. Early Years classrooms will be set up to reflect the nature of play, learning and exploration that underpin the development of young children. As children who are currently in Reception and moving into Year 1 have missed such as significant proportion of their Reception experience we feel it is essential, as part of their 'recovery programme' to have access to elements of the Early Years environment and approach. Year 1 will not, therefore be set up with forward facing tables in rows.

Protective measures.

Since reopening in June we have implemented many additional measures to maintain the highest levels of safety and minimise risk. These include;

Increased levels of cleaning

Catch it, kill it, bin it approach

Regular handwashing

Carefully managed movement around the site to ensure that bubbles do not mix

- Staggered start times,
- Staggered collection times,
- Staggered playtimes and lunchtimes.
- A one way system around the school site to promote social distancing.

From September, children are no longer required to social distance.

Cleaning

We will continue the additional cleaning measures we have implemented this term. Classrooms will be kept as clear as possible to enable cleaning staff to clean surfaces. Resources that are shared will be cleaned after use/daily either with wipes/spray, steam treatment or they will be placed in storage for the recommended 72 hours before being used by others. Staff will wipe surfaces in their own areas as necessary during the day. Toilets will be cleaned at lunchtime and a full school clean will be carried out at the end of each day with a focus on touch points and surfaces.

Toilets

There is no longer a requirement for bubbles to have separate toilets. Therefore, from September children from different bubbles will be accessing shared toilet blocks. We will continue to limit the number of children entering the toilets at any one time to reduce close contact and contact between children in different bubbles. Toilets will be cleaned regularly during the day.

Staff.

Where possible, staff will remain consistent to their bubble. However, many members of our team do work across several classes. Guidance allows staff to work across bubbles as well as staff coming into school who may have been in other settings. (E.g Coach Chris, supply teachers.)

Staff will be observing social distancing rules in bubbles and around school where appropriate.

Arrival and collection;

To enable us to manage the number of people on site at any one time it is necessary to continue with staggered drop off and collection arrangements. This system has worked incredibly well since June. However, with all children returning we have double the number of parents and children who will be arriving and leaving each day. Staggered times will be as follows;

Year group	Arrive	Collect	Where?
Nursery	8.30am –	3.00pm	Nursery outdoor area gate
Reception	8.30am	3.00pm	Reception outdoor area gate
Year 1	8.40am	3.10pm	Year 1 cloakroom door
Year 2	8.50am	3.20pm	Library door
Year 3	9.00am	3.30pm	Playground door to corridor
Year 4	9.10am	3.40pm	Mobile door

We hope that club will be open from 7.30am and until 5.45pm (please see club arrangements below.) Some parents will have children in more than one bubble. We appreciate that it is less convenient to have several drop off times. However, in the interests of safety we do ask that parents keep to their designated times. If this is not possible we ask parents to arrive at the later of their children's drop off times and collect at the earlier of the collection times.

Parents and children should arrive for their designated drop off time, queuing at the playground gate. Whilst the '2m rule' has now been reduced, we will continue to promote social distancing around the school site and ask that parents avoid close contact with others and follow the system put in place.

Children should remain with their parents/carers on the path at all times and walk with them through the school grounds. We ask that parents ensure their child(ren) does not run up onto grass verges around school. Scooters and bikes should not be ridden on the school site. Please remind your child to get off and push once they enter via the gate.

The gate will be opened and parents and children will follow the path around to their child's classroom entrance. Once children have gone in or come out to parents, parents should please continue to follow the footpath around school and onto the daily mile. The path will lead you to the field gate where you can exit the field onto the car park.

Being ready for the day.

Children will be expected to wear their school uniform according to the school policy. Guidance no longer advises that fresh clothes should be worn every day.

Children can bring a small bag to school with them. This may contain a water bottle, their spelling book, reading book and diary. They should also bring their packed lunch unless having a school dinner.

Children will need their Games/PE kit in school each week. Children should leave their draw string bag in school.

Guidance now allows the sharing of some resources, however, many items should still be for individual use only. I am sure you will appreciate that it is not possible for us to supply every child in school with their own glue stick, scissors etc. Therefore, we will provide a white

board, white board pen and pencil for every child. We ask that each child please brings to school with them a small, simple pencil case (easily wipeable and no 'fiddly bits' please!) containing a set of colouring pencils and a glue stick. Felt tip pens and scissors are optional. Their pencil case should be clearly named and will remain in school.

We will resume sending reading books home from the start of term. Set books and any comments will be recorded in Reading Diaries. We ask that parents write a comment to confirm the book has been completed before children change their books. Please read with your child regularly and change their book at least weekly.

It is essential that children come to school equipped with the items they need for the day. We cannot permit the drop off of items during the school day into the school office. This creates an additional transmission risk and compromises staff safety.

Curriculum

We will continue to plan for and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum to all children. We will also be carefully planning how to address the missed learning, particularly in Maths and English, resulting from the school closure as well as support those who are ready, to make further progress. As I outlined in a previous communication, as school staff and parents, we must recognise that this 'recovery' will happen over a period of time rather than being a short term 'catch up'. We will also be planning in time and opportunities to support children's wellbeing.

Amendments will be made to the school timetable to accommodate staggered times and allow for reflection times (to replace assemblies) and regular opportunities for movement to encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

Lunchtimes.

We plan for our school kitchen to fully reopen and begin serving hot, cooked dinners at lunchtime. Children in Nursery will eat their school dinner (provided as part of their lunchtime care provision) in their classroom, supported by Nursery staff. Children in Reception to Year 4 will eat in the hall. Lunchtimes will be staggered to ensure that only two classes (Key Stage bubbles) are in the hall at any time and tables will be suitably spread to avoid close contact. The hall will be cleaned in between bubbles. If your child chooses to have a packed lunch, they will also eat this with their classmates in the hall.

Children bringing a packed lunch from home will store their lunchbox in their class trolley. Please ensure children are able to manage opening items in their lunches independently. A reminder that we are a Healthy School – no fizzy drinks or sweets please.

Playtimes

Each Key Stage will have its own designated playtime. The playground will be sectioned off into two parts enabling class bubbles to enjoy a socially distanced play. Where possible we will make use of the space on the school field. However, as we move into Autumn this may not be possible. The adventure playground will not be in use initially – this be reviewed once the term has begun and if reopened, a separate risk assessment will be carried out and protective measures put in place which will include cleaning of the equipment and management of how many children access it at a time.

Children will be going outdoors in almost all weathers so please ensure your child has a waterproof coat (and scarf, hat and gloves in colder months) in school **every day**. Usually on

a wet lunchtime, children would be placed in mixed groupings and supervised in classrooms. We do not have the staffing capacity for this so wherever possible children will be outside. It is also important that children get some fresh air and physical activity during the day.

Snack

The School Fruit Scheme provides a piece of snack for all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. We do not yet know whether this service will resume in the Autumn term but will notify parents as soon as we know more. It may be the case that children in these year groups will be required to bring a snack to school with them. Children in Year 3 and 4 should bring a snack with them as usual. Snack should be a piece of fruit – whole or cut. Please ensure grapes are cut in half. Any cut fruit should be sent in a throwaway bag – no reusable pots please.

Before and after school care.

We have recently sent the link to an online survey asking for parents to inform us of their childcare needs for September. Parent responses to this will help us to plan for this provision. If you have already completed the survey but your needs have changed in light of the staggered starts above, please complete the survey a second time and your original response will be deleted.

We very much hope to offer before and after school care to all children from the beginning of term as we recognise that many families depend upon this service. The provision will be subject to constant review of guidance, the local and national picture as well as staffing capacity and demand. Please note, it may be necessary for us to limit the number of children accessing club.

Current guidance states; *We recognise that this [wraparound care] will be logistically challenging for schools, particularly for clubs that would normally offer support across year groups (as is the case at Birches). Schools should carefully consider how they can make such provision work alongside their wider protective measures, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible. If it is not possible to maintain bubbles being used during the school day then schools should use small, consistent groups. Parents are advised to limit the number of wraparound or extra-curricular providers they access.*

We envisage that before and after school care will be run in the school hall as always. We do not have the space or staffing capacity to offer additional groups. Therefore, children attending club will form an additional bubble. Where possible we will minimise contact between children in different class/year group bubbles within this group by creating 'zones' within the hall. We do ask that in taking up this service, parents accept and understand that children may come into close contact with children outside of their 'day bubble'. We will of course ensure that our other protective measures are in place (as they are during the school day) to minimise risk to children and staff. It is very likely that the types of activities on offer must be adapted to protect children and staff and more time may be spent engaged with 'screen based' activities. As it is safe to do so we will reintroduce some of the usual activities children enjoy.

Extra-curricular Clubs

As much as we would like to commence after school clubs as soon as possible, our priority for the start of term must be in establishing our general whole school arrangements. Once we are satisfied that these are working well and are in accordance with guidance at the time, we will

look to begin Coach Chris' Football Club and keyboard tuition. The offer of other clubs will be reviewed throughout the term.

Children's wellbeing;

We recognise that for some children, returning to school will be a big transition after such a long time away. We will, as always, do all we can to support the children as they adapt. Some children may be feeling very anxious. Please contact myself or your child's class teacher to discuss their return to school and individual strategies to support this should you feel the need.

Supporting all children as they adapt and return to the routines and expectations of school will be an ongoing priority for us as a school.

Communication with office/staff and school visitors;

We request that parents contact the office via email or telephone wherever possible. Visits to the office in person should be avoided to minimise risk to staff. Essential visitors will be able to come into school. They will be briefed on school procedures and agree to follow them before entering.

In the mornings and at collection, staff will welcome and dismiss children from their classroom/designated door. We ask that if parents need to speak with their child's class teacher they email them directly or call the office to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak. Staff will not be able to engage in conversations at the door; please understand they are not being rude or obstructive; this is necessary to reduce risk to staff and keep the flow of parents moving around the site.

Alternatives to face to face meetings will be planned wherever possible.

Parents should not enter children's classrooms at any time.

Attendance;

From September, school attendance is mandatory for all children. Should your child not be in school for any reason, our usual school policy applies. Please let us know on the first day of absence why your child is not in school. If we receive no message, the office will call to ensure everyone is safe and well.

Guidance states;

- Parents have a duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- Schools have a responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence and the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Vulnerable/at risk groups

The Government have said that there are now far fewer children and young people who are advised to shield and therefore the majority of children will be able to return to school, including those who have shielding family members. A small number of children may still be unable to attend due to public health advice or the requirement to self-isolate because they have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves or they have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19. If local transmission rates rise, children may be advised to shield and therefore would be temporarily absent.

Where children are unable to attend school due to clinical or public health guidance, remote education will be available to them and pupil's engagement with these tasks will be monitored.

Where a child has not been able to attend school due to clinical or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

Illness

If a child has displayed any of the identified symptoms;

A high temperature,

Continuous, new cough

Loss of taste and/or smell

They (and any siblings) **should not** attend school. A test should be arranged as soon as possible. If a positive result is returned, parents should notify us as soon as possible. The person testing positive should self-isolate for 7 days (or until better) household members and anyone with whom they have been in close contact with should self-isolate for 14 days. If a negative result is received children may return to school and self-isolation may end. School will not request proof of the negative test result.

To safeguard all, we will have a zero-tolerance approach to children who cannot adhere to Catch it, Kill it, Bin it as this is a risk to others. Where we believe a child is coughing or sneezing frequently, parents will be asked to arrange collection. As such if your child has hayfever, please do give them antihistamine as we may be concerned about symptoms which may overlap with Covid-19 symptoms. Likewise please communicate this to us.

If your child is ill with any 'non-Covid-19' symptoms we ask that parents keep them at home if they present a risk of making others unwell. To enable us to sustain our staffing levels we must be vigilant and minimise risk of them becoming unwell and therefore unable to work.

Confirmed case in school

Our procedures if we have a suspected case of COVID-19 will remain in place and in line with guidance. Designated spaces have been identified if isolation is necessary. Any child or member of staff displaying suspected symptoms should be tested as soon as possible. If a confirmed case occurs in school, we will take advice as to the required action (which may be the associated bubble should be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days, a key stage or even the whole school.)

Local lockdown

In the event of an enforced local lockdown that includes our area, our school may be required to close. Arrangements for remote learning will be in place to ensure continuation of education from home.

Remote learning

We are incredibly proud of the home learning offer staff have provided since we closed in March. If remote learning is required in September, we are considering new ways of working to support and engage children. Further details will be provided as plans are confirmed.

Prior to our reopening in June we shared a number of documents with you to help parents and children prepare. Our Return to School Parent's Information pack will be revised and updated as will our Behaviour Policy and Home-school Agreement. These will be shared with parents before the start of term.

I hope the information outlined here has helped answer some of your questions regarding the return to school in September and has reassured you. I appreciate that there is a lot to digest and I hope you are not overwhelmed! However, throughout the school closure we have endeavoured to keep parents well informed in the hope it will help allay concerns and anxieties. Plans are, as always, subject to review and may change in line with Government guidance.

If you have any further questions, queries or concerns about your child and their return to school, please do email office@birches.staffs.sch.uk or myself jferretti@birches.staffs.sch.uk and we will respond as soon as we are able to do so.

I'd like to reassure you that every decision is made through our eyes as both school leaders and parents, with the bests of our children, staff and school community at its heart. As a staff we are very much looking forward to welcoming the children back into school and will continue to work as a strong team to ensure this return is as safe and positive as possible for all.

Mrs Ferretti

Acting Headteacher.

N.B. Please note, we are delighted to have been awarded funding to have works carried out on our roof as well as around the school site to heighten safety in the school grounds. This does mean that we may have to accommodate contractors at times. This will be managed as effectively as possible and with every effort to ensure that impact on the children is minimal.