

# Information for Parents

## Return to School

### March 2021



We are delighted that we are able to plan for all children to return to school on March 8th. We do appreciate however that returning to school, no matter how excited your child may be, may be a daunting experience for them and for you as a parent as they get used to the necessary changes.

We also understand some children may be feeling anxious about the return to school after another extended time away from school.

We hope that the information that follows will support and help you and your child prepare for their return to school.



# What measures are we introducing to make school as safe as possible?

Children are not required to socially distance in school. Staff will maintain social distancing where appropriate/possible. We do ask that all visitors and parents continue to observe a 2 metre distance at all times.

To ensure we have done all we can to minimise risk, we are committed to maintaining;

- the integrity of the 'bubble' to ensure that children do not mix outside of their group and space where possible. Where it is necessary for children from different bubbles to share a space, they will remain with children from their bubble only and be seated separately.
- high standards and increased frequency of cleaning.
- vigilance - ensuring that children and staff who present with potential symptoms do not attend school and are tested promptly.
- Staff are testing twice weekly

We have completed a rigorous risk assessment process and many changes / additional procedures have been put in place.



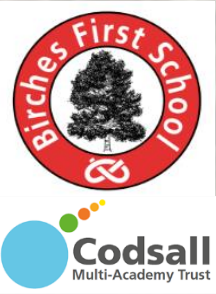
**STAY 2 METRES**



**APART**

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. The principles that underpin this plan are set out in guidance 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



**STAY 2 METRES**



**APART**

**At Birches we have continued to:**

use our thorough cleaning schedule and heightened cleaning routines.

complete infection control training as a staff and refresh as needed.

remove all soft furnishings where possible.

remove unnecessary furniture from rooms to ensure effective cleaning and maximise space.

Follow guidance and rearranged classrooms Y1-Y4/Hall/Club to prevent face to face sitting/working.  
Create a range of signage to support and remind all members of the school community.

Create a one-way system around the school site

Make changes to the school day to prevent bubbles mixing and large numbers of people gathering.

Cordoned off areas of additional risk.

Planned for increased levels of hand hygiene.

Purchased new bins for safe disposal of tissues and waste.

Purchased PPE for situations that may require the need.



# Arrival and Collection

We ask that parents and children observe social distancing at all times when on the school site. A range of signs have been created to remind all members of the school community. Children should walk with their parent until they reach their classroom door and should **not run** ahead/off the path.

Please arrive promptly at your child's arrival and collection time but not more than a couple minutes before (to allow time for the previous group to move through and exit.) Late arrivals/collections will place additional demand on an already stretched staff and increase risk levels. The gates will be locked in between groups to help us maintain the system therefore late arrivals will be required to wait for the next 'time' to access their class.

Guidance states that only **one parent per family** should come to school. We also ask that siblings who do not attend school are left at home if at all possible and not brought to school unless parents have no other option.



# Movement around school - external

Children and staff will move around the school site externally whenever possible.

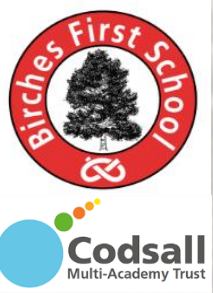
We will continue to use our one way system to support social distancing and to help us manage arrival and collection times.

Parents must arrive on time – please line up at the marker by the playground gate. We ask parents to observe social distancing in the queue by following the markers, ensuring your child stays with you until you reach their 'bubble' / classroom . At each arrival time (8.30, 8.35, 8.40) the gate will open.

Parents should walk around the school site, following the 2 metre markers until they reach their child's classroom.

Whilst we appreciate this is less convenient for parents, we ask that siblings are brought and collected at their own, separate, designated times due to staffing capacity and time needed to clean rooms and ensuring the maximum learning time for all children in class. For Example if you have a child in Nursery, Y1 and Y3 please drop each child off at 8.30am, 8.35am and 8.40am.

There will be two lines at the gate entrance one for Nursery, Y2 and Y3 the other line for Reception, Y1 and Y4



## Movement around school – external cont...

When you arrive with your child at their room, please encourage your child to enter the room swiftly to avoid congestion behind you.

Children will need to have their lunch, bag and water bottle in their hand to carry into class themselves (again, staff are unable to take items for children.)

As we have now reduced the drop off and collection time the waiting time has reduced to 10 minutes. Please do not congregate outside the school gates and meet in groups.

We have had spot visits from the council and police. I encourage all parents to abide by the social distancing rules both within and outside the school gates.



## Movement around school – external cont...

Once children have walked to their classroom door from the path, we ask that parents move swiftly on, following the path around the school site and onto the daily mile.

The route will take you to the mid-field gate and back onto the car park. Once back onto the pavement, whilst beyond the school grounds, we hope that parents will continue to observe social distancing, especially if the next group of parents (and children) are queuing. We would suggest that parents cross the road to walk on the other side of the road to exit Birches Avenue.

**Please note – the Adventure Playground and Silly Sally Tower (behind Year 1) are out of bounds – please do not allow children to play on these areas.**



## Movement around school - internal

Year 3 children will use the internal corridor to access their class and the playground.

Reception children and children attending club will access their toilets via the main corridor.

Staff will supervise children in their movement around school.

Staff will also be observing social distancing measures in their own movement around school.



# 'Bubbles'

Each Key Stage (approx. 60 children) will form its own 'bubble'. The new guidance (22/2/21) states that 'schools may keep pupils in their class groups but also allow mixing in wider groups for specialist teaching'. We may be 'mixing' Key Stages (Y1/2 and Y3/4) for specialised teaching from March 15<sup>th</sup> as part of our Recovery Plan.

Please be reassured our cleaning and prevention/systems of controls will be meticulous throughout transitions.

Bubbles will not come into contact or mix with other bubbles during the day.

Bubbles will have staggered playtimes and lunchtimes as well as arrival and collection times to ensure this is manageable.

Guidance states that staff are able to work across more than one bubble.



# Attendance

From 8<sup>th</sup> March, attendance for all children is mandatory. Therefore it is expected that all children will be in school.

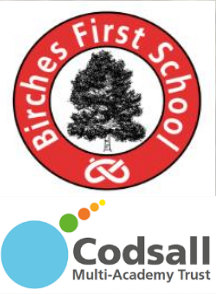
## **Guidance states;**

**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**

If you have received medical advice that your child should not attend school please speak with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Should your child not be in school for any reason, the normal school policy will apply. If your child is absent for any reason, please do notify the school office on the first morning of absence by telephone or email. If we receive no message, the office will telephone to check all is safe and well.

**Children who have displayed symptoms themselves or live with someone who has displayed symptoms must not attend school and self isolate until a negative test result is received/advised period of self-isolation has passed – please notify school as soon as possible.**



# The school day

To reduce the number of people arriving on site at any time and avoid large numbers gathering, we will be operating staggered start and collection times.

Parents MUST arrive promptly (but not too early!) to ensure this system works smoothly and swiftly.

Class/ bubble	Arrive	Location/ classroom	Collect	From
Nursery	8.30am	Nursery gate	3.00pm	Nursery Gate
Reception	8.30am	Reception gate	3.00pm	Reception Gate
Year 1	8.35am	Y1 cloakroom	3.05pm	Y1 Cloakroom
Year 2	8.35am	Library door	3.05pm	Library Door
Year 3	8.40am	Playground door	3.10pm	Playground Door
Year 4	8.40am	Y4 Mobile	3.10pm	Y4 Mobile

Nursery children attending for the morning session only should be collected from the field gate at 11.30am.



# Sibling drop-off / Collection/Club

From Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March parents will **not** be able to drop off later or collect earlier. We have reduced the staggered times so that this should not be an inconvenience to any parents (maximum waiting time of 10 minutes) We understand that this may be an inconvenience however, we would like to ensue that all children are in school for the whole teaching time to aid with our 'recovery' from January/February's School Closure.



# Before and Afterschool Club

We recognise that many of our parents rely on before and after school care to enable them to work. We will therefore be offering club from the start of term. As you'll understand, we have had to make some significant changes to our provision to make this possible.

**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.*

Before and after school care will be run in the school hall as always. We will minimise contact between children in different class/year group bubbles within this group by creating year group '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. The types of activities on offer must be adapted to protect children and staff however we did in September-December we will have some of the usual activities children enjoy alongside the ipads.

Unfortunately we will not be serving breakfast. This will be reviewed and as soon as restrictions allow we will look to reinstating this offer. In the meantime, children should eat before arriving to school and are welcomed to bring with them a healthy breakfast snack to eat at the table (nothing that requires crockery or cutlery please).



# Before and Afterschool Club - Procedure

On arrival in the morning or after school, parents should buzz the intercom by the front office as usual. A member of staff will answer asking who you are dropping off/collecting. Parents should then go to the field gate by the hall where a member of club staff will open the gate and sign your child in/out.

On arrival, children will walk from the gate into the hall via the double doors, joining their year group 'zone' and placing their belongings on the back of or under their chair. Children will wash their hands on arrival.

Children are welcomed to bring a healthy snack to eat within before school and / or after school club.

## **Before school -**

Club will open at 7.30am. Children can be dropped off **any time** from **7.30am to 8.20am**.

## **After school –**

At the end of the day, staff will dismiss their classes then walk any children booked into club to the hall where they will join their class zone. Collection from club can begin from 3.20pm to ensure that classes being dismissed have all passed through and off the site. Children can then be collected at any time between **3.20pm and 5.30pm**.

**An online booking form will be sent Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March for the remainder of the term (1<sup>st</sup> April) via text which parents must complete by Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March we will not be able to accept last minute bookings. Please note - all booked sessions will be charged.**



# Lunchtimes

Lunchtimes will be staggered to enable us to limit the number of children in the hall / on the playground at any one time.

Children will eat in lunch in the hall with their bubble. Each bubble will have 30 minutes in the hall to eat their lunch and 30 minutes on the playground.

Tables and chairs will be cleaned in between each sitting.

Hot school dinners will be available – our menu will be uploaded to the website.

Lunchtime Supervisors will supervise and support the children during their lunch.



# 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 Phonics, Maths and English, resulting from the school closure as well as support those who are ready, to make further progress. As 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.



# Packed lunches

We are delighted that our school kitchen will be serving hot, cooked dinners (free for children in Reception, Year 1, Year 2 and those eligible for FSMs, £2.40 for all other children.) All children in Nursery who stay for lunch will have a cooked dinner (part of their daily lunchtime care charge - £6.00).

If your child will be bringing a packed lunch, we ask that parents send them with items **they can open and manage themselves** (items like Frubes etc are very tricky for children to open themselves and make a lot of mess if children open them incorrectly.) Staff **will not be able** to handle yoghurts and crisps etc to open them as this involves close contact at a time of day when children will be transferring their hands to their mouths and back a lot. Many children struggle to open crisp packets, parents may want to consider tipping the crisps into an easy to open plastic pot or container to ensure children can manage this themselves. We are a healthy school - no sweets, chocolate bars or juice/fizzy drinks in lunchboxes please.

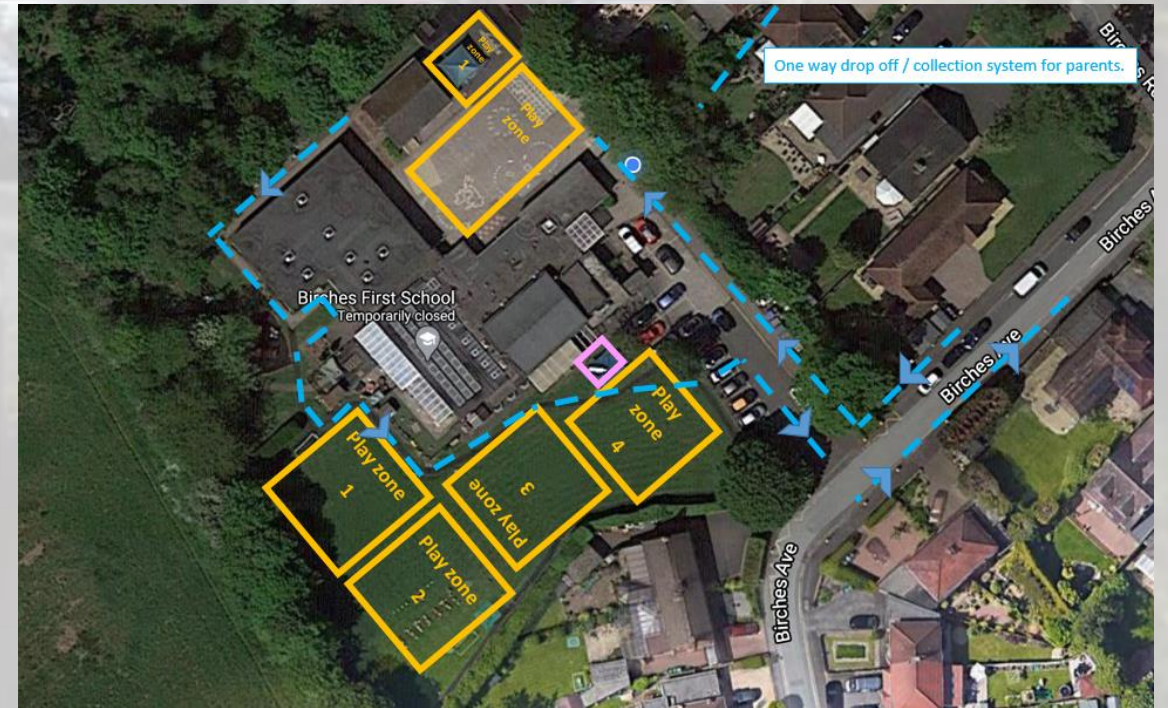
Children in Year 3 and 4 should also bring a **healthy, mid-morning fruit snack** (no tubs or containers please). Children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will be provided with a piece of fruit as part of the Government free fruit scheme.



# Playtimes

All children will have a morning play in addition EYFS/Y1/2 will have afternoon playtime. These will be staggered to ensure that children are remaining in their Key Stage Bubbles.

'Play Zones' have been created on the playground and on the school field (see site map) to ensure that if more than one Key Stage Bubble is outside at the same time, they will not come into contact.



# What should my child bring?

Children will need ;

- a filled water bottle (cups will be available if a child forgets their bottle)
- packed lunch (if bringing own)
- Years 3 & 4 - mid-morning snack
- Book bag or SMALL backpack
- Reading book, diary and spellings book (issued in Sept)
- Years 1-4 a small, simple pencil case containing;
  - A glue stick
  - Set of colouring pencils
  - Set of felt tip pens (optional) (Y1-4) **NO SHARPIES PLEASE**
  - Pencil sharpener (Y1-4)
  - Scissors (optional) (Y1-4)

**We will provide a pencil, whiteboard and whiteboard pen.**

Their pencil case will remain in school. Please ensure that ALL items are named

Plus, dependant on forecast, please send a **coat/ sunhat**. If warm weather, please apply an all day sun cream before school in the morning. Due to space and staffing constraints, children will be outside in almost all weathers. It is essential that they have a suitable, warm, waterproof coat in school.

Children in **Nursery (and any other class if your child is prone to accidents)** should bring a small bag with spare clothes in (in case of accidents). This bag will be left in school on their peg.

**We ask that children DO NOT bring additional items into school to reduce the risk of transmission UNLESS agreed in advance with Teachers/Headteacher as part of REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS.**



Spare clothes for Nursery please – to be left in school.

**We ask that parents please do ensure their child has everything they need for the day as we will not be accepting forgotten items at the office.**



All day cream applied before school please.

# What should my child wear?

Children should return to school in normal school uniform according to the school policy – please visit <http://www.birches.staffs.sch.uk/uniform/>

It is no longer a requirement for children to wear freshly washed clothes each day to minimise risk of transmission.

Long hair should be tied back please.

Children should wear their Games kit to school (with PE shorts underneath) on PE/Games days – teachers will notify parents of these days. Changing for PE in class during the day is likely to lead to unnecessary close contact between children and will be difficult for children to manage within the new classroom layouts.



Photos used with parent's permission.

# Early Years Classrooms

Although children are no longer required to socially distance, classrooms have been adapted to encourage social distancing / minimise risk of transmission as much as possible.

In Early Years, all children will have the freedom to access all the resources within the classroom. They will have the opportunity to 'Free Flow' throughout the day between the indoor and outdoor environment.

The children will NOT be expected to sit at tables all day – they will engage with a range of carefully planned activities around the classroom and in the outdoor area.



# Key Stage 1 and 2

Classrooms for Year 1/2/3 and 4 have been adapted to prevent face to face sitting/working.

Children will be allocated a working space which will only be used by them.

Outdoor learning time will be encouraged as much as possible and the children will have playtimes throughout the day.



Year 3



Year 4





Year 1



Year 2

# Toilets

Guidance now states that children from different bubbles are able to access the same toilets.

Each class will have allocated toilets and where two classes are required to share, designated cubicles and sinks will be identified if possible.

Toilets and sinks will be clearly labelled and handwashing guidance / reminders will be on display.

We will continue to limit the number of children that enter at any one time.

Staff will carry out regular cleaning of toilet areas, wiping down handles, doors, taps and bin lids etc as appropriate and a mid day clean of all toilets will be carried out.



# First aid, medications and illness

Staff will administer prescribed medicines where this required in line with the school policy. However, due to our vigilance regarding illness in school it may be necessary for your child to remain at home until any course of prescribed medicine is completed to ensure they are fully fit and well. Please speak to Miss Varricchione/the school office.

Inhalers and general first aid will be managed within bubbles where possible.

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, or we believe is otherwise unwell, 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.

If your child is unwell in any way, especially if they have displayed any Covid-19 symptoms, please **do not** send them into school and notify the school office as soon as possible.



# What happens if a child displays symptoms while at school?

In the case of a child (or staff member) displaying symptoms, they will be immediately placed into a well ventilated space for isolation, supervised by a member of staff. A designated isolation toilet will be available.

If they have a sibling in school, they will be collected from their bubble and will join them in isolation. Parents will be called immediately and the child(ren) taken home.


Once collected, the isolation area and the child's bubble room will be thoroughly cleaned in line with guidance.

The child / staff member should start a **10 day** period of isolation.

All household members should isolate for 10 days. A test should be arranged.


If the test comes back positive, all staff and children within the child's bubble may be asked to isolate for **10 days** (we will notify parents of this). In such circumstances we will take advice from Public Health England.

If the test is negative, isolation can end for the child and family members and they can return to school and work (unless they have since developed symptoms themselves – they must then wait for results of their own test).


Public Health England

Education guidance


The most important symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)

  
new and continuous cough

or

  
high temperature



or

  
loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If **you have symptoms** of coronavirus, you need to **self-isolate for 7 days**  
If **you live with someone who has symptoms**, you need to **self-isolate for 14 days** from the day their symptoms started

**For most people coronavirus will be a mild illness.** However if you have any of the symptoms you should self-isolate at home



Stop the spread of coronavirus




**Wash your hands more often and for 20 seconds**

Use soap and water or a hand sanitiser when you:


- Get home or into work
- Blow your nose, sneeze or cough
- Eat or handle food




Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away straight away




**Supervise young children** to ensure they wash their hands more often than usual



Posters and lesson plans on general hand hygiene can be found on the eBug website



Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual using your **standard cleaning products**



Staff, young people and children should stay at home if they are **unwell** with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell **to avoid spreading infection to others**

If staff, young people or children become unwell with any of the coronavirus symptoms on site, **they should be sent home**

We are asking schools, colleges, nurseries, childminders and other registered childcare settings **to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children** where they can

# Behaviour

We understand that children may find aspects of the return to school challenging, particularly at the beginning.

Staff will support them with these changes as best they can, however, they are not able to provide the same support and comfort they might usually give.

As a school we will have the same high expectations of behaviour and children will be expected to follow the Golden Rules. We have also created some new rules which are necessary to ensure that we can reduce risk as much as possible. Please refresh yourselves and your child/ren with our amended Behaviour Policy – it is important that parents read and understand these expectations and send their child back to school in the knowledge that they are agreeing to comply.



# Parents

We ask that parents are understanding and supportive of the measures we have put in place and adhere to the new arrangements themselves and remind their children to do the same.

As you know, we value the partnership with our parents very much and want our positive community spirit to continue to grow.

Please understand that staff will, at no point, wish to be obstructive or unwilling to provide comfort or support. As a team we must follow strict guidelines in the interests of everyone's safety.

We appreciate your cooperation and patience during this time.



# Will home learning still be available?

We are required to continue to provide a home learning offer to those children who are unable to attend school due to medical advice or the requirement to self isolate.

We are very proud of the level of support we were able to offer our children during lockdown and our teaching team will continue to provide a high standard of home learning. This may be a combination of set tasks online, project grids, links to virtual teaching / lessons (e/g Oak Academy, BBC Bitesize) and some recorded video input all accessed via our Teams Platform/email.



# Questions, queries and comments

Please email:-

the office

[office@birches.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@birches.staffs.sch.uk)

Miss Varricchione

[headteacher@birches.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@birches.staffs.sch.uk)

or your child's class teacher

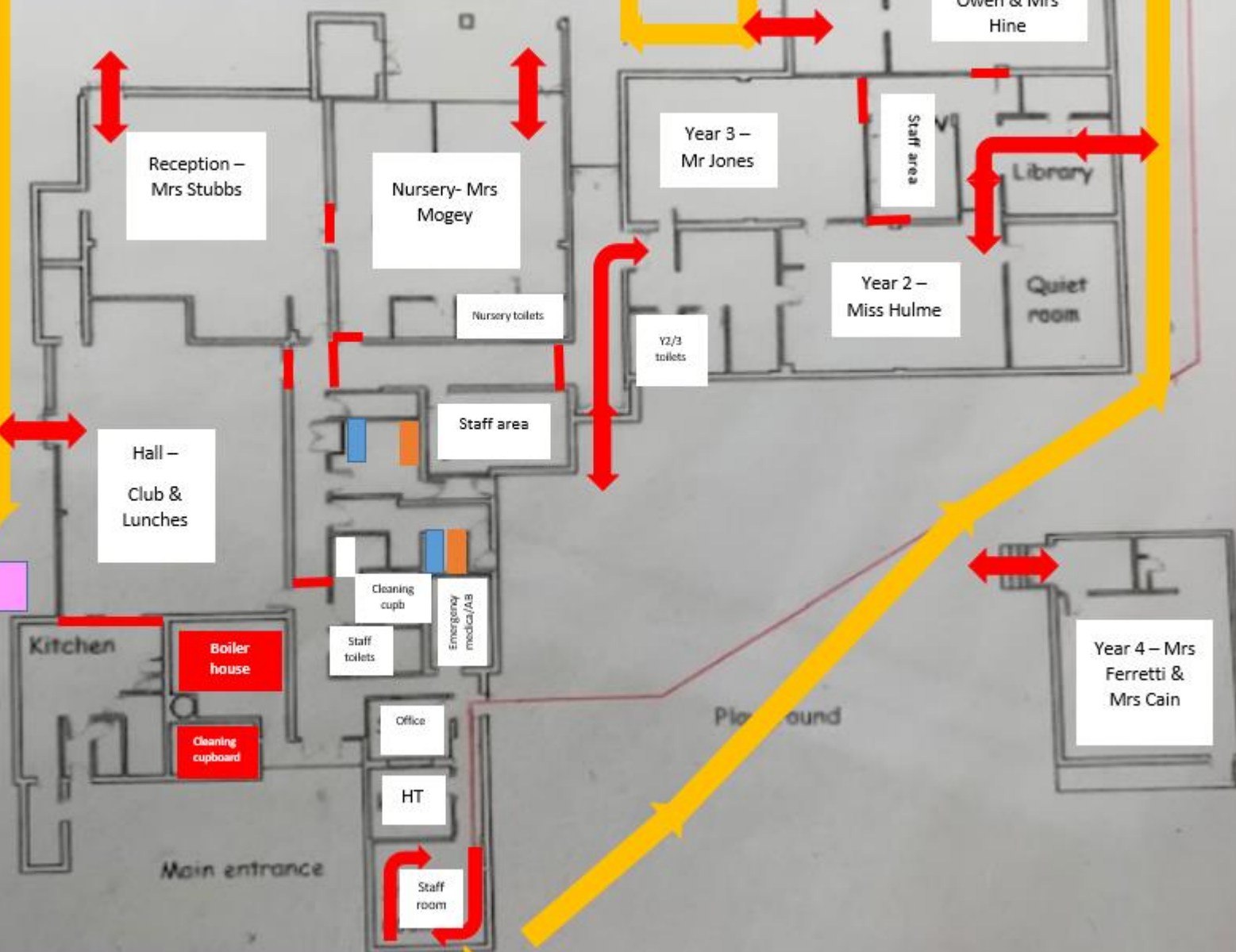
If you wish to speak to someone in person, please phone 01902 297910.

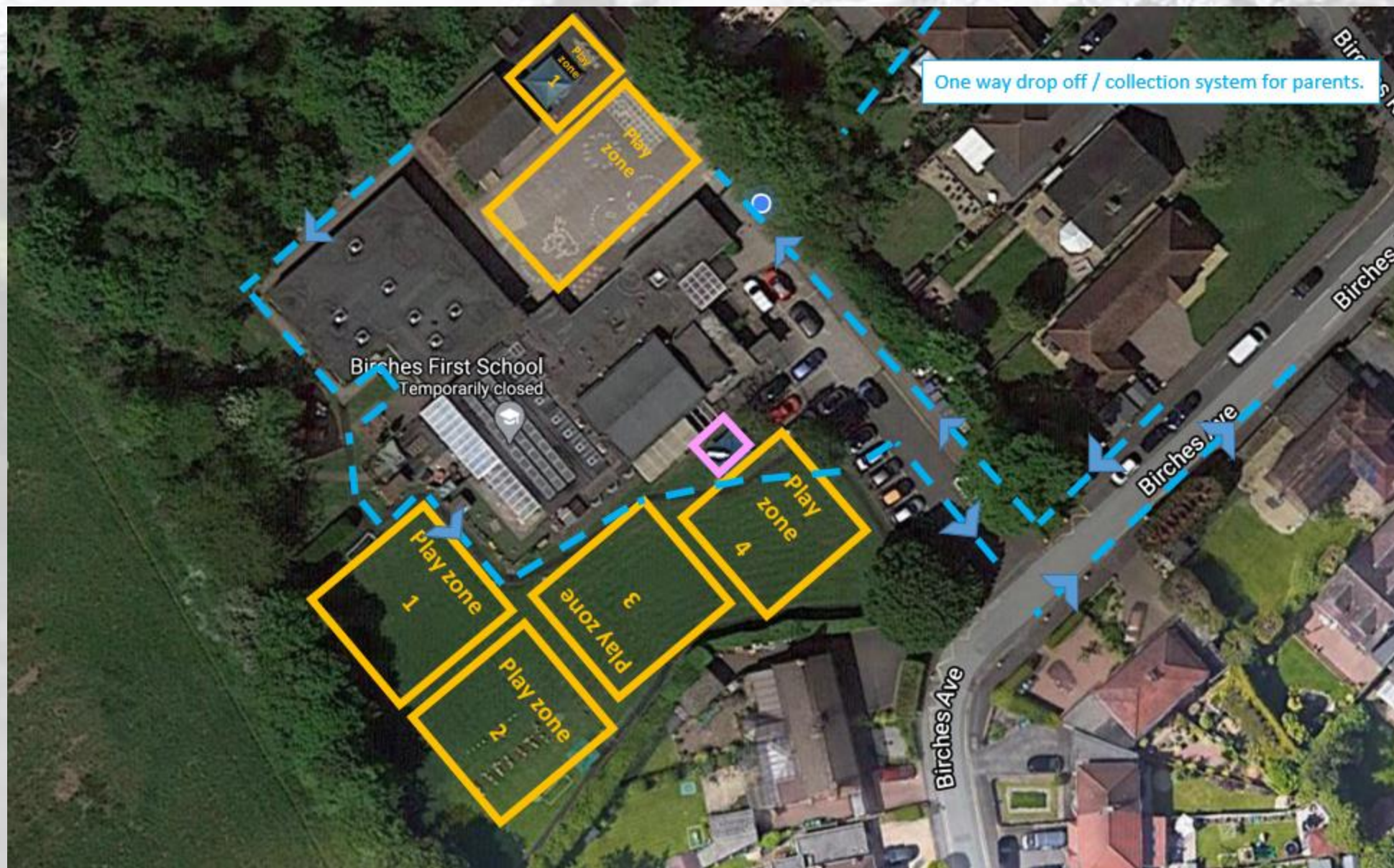
Teachers will reply to emails or return phone calls within a timely manner but please understand that they will be with their class during the day.



# School September Site Plan

- Reception Toilet
- Y4 Toilet
- Toilet





The measures, arrangements and systems outlined above are based on current guidance. As we are all aware, the local and national picture can change rapidly and despite movements back toward 'normality', the air of uncertainty remains. We hear regular reminders of how fragile the situation is and we do remain in the middle of a global pandemic. We ask therefore, that parents understand that our plans and provision may have to change at short notice in response to updated guidance and restrictions.

We must all continue to do our part and follow the guidelines we are given to ensure we can reach the goal of Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June!

Stay alert, control the virus, save lives.



Thank you for your  
continued support during  
this lockdown  
it has been VERY much  
appreciated.  
We are very excited to have  
the whole of Birches back  
together again !  
Miss Varricchione

