

St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School, Stevenage



Parents and Carers Frequently Asked Questions about a potential return to school

We hope that these questions and answers (many originally posed through the recent survey) will help you to make a considered decision about whether you will decide to send your child back to school from early June if permitted. I know that this is an incredibly difficult decision for everyone but is one that only you can make.

Social distancing

1. How will social distancing rules between children be implemented and enforced (including supporting young children and children with communication needs)?

This will undoubtedly be a challenge, but the following procedures have been put in place:

- Children have been split into small, consistent groups ('bubbles') and kept in that same group 'bubble' throughout the day with the same staff assigned to that bubble
- 2m sections marked inside and outside school building to aid lining up and circulation
- Regular reminders and modelling by staff
- Displays, posters reminding children about social distancing
- Use of Makaton signs and social stories to support children's understanding
- Regular practise of moving and lining up in this way
- Breaks, lunches and school start/finish times have been staggered
- Reminders to parents about modelling social distancing
- Group bubbles will not interact during the school day

2. How will you support children with the emotional and social effects of social distancing?

We fully recognise that the children will find it hard not to run up to and hug their friends. They will be reminded and supported to keep the social distancing rules. They will be engaging in fun interactive activities, so that they can still enjoy the time with their friends. Individual support will be given to children who need further explanations or strategies to help them as required. Children will be given clear and supportive guidance and helped to socially distance without fear of reprimand and there will be lots of praise for changes that they make.

Illness

3. What is the guidance on self isolating?

Symptomatic people should self-isolate for 7 days from when symptoms started. People who have a symptomatic household member must stay at home and self-isolate for 14 days.

See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

4. What happens if one child is sick in the class?

If a person displays symptoms of coronavirus, this procedure will be followed:

- They will be moved to an isolation area within school and immediate collection will be arranged (pupil)
- Siblings within the school will also be collected
- If it is a member of staff, they will immediately go home
- All other pupils will be moved to a new classroom (there are classrooms ready prepared) where they will wash their hands and continue their day within school
- Areas occupied will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- Equipment used by the affected person will be placed in quarantine
- If other pupil belongings are in the classroom (drink bottle & snack box) these will also be left in quarantine at school for 7 days
- The ill person & family must then follow the guidance on self-isolation and not return to school until their period of self-isolation has been completed or a negative Covid test has been confirmed. Tests are available for anyone of 5yrs+ in an educational setting
- If a positive Covid test is confirmed, all pupils and staff associated with that bubble will be required to isolate for 14 days

5. How are we sure that no families have contacted Covid19?

We cannot be sure. Trust within our school community will be vital. If someone has Covid 19 symptoms, they must NOT come to school and must follow the government guidelines on self-isolation.

6. Will the school have temperature checks for all children on entry?

No. Parents are expected to take their child's temperature daily at home before coming to school. It is neither practical nor safe for school to check children's temperature as they arrive. The school will however monitor temperatures that arise throughout the day and act accordingly.

7. Are Covid 19 tests available for children if they develop symptoms? How do you get them?

Everyone aged 5 and over with coronavirus symptoms can be tested. More information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

8. There will be many children who live with someone who is in the "at risk" or "shielded categories", how will the school be able to accommodate these children?

Children who live in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable should continue to learn at home. The school will continue to follow the advice of Public Health England (PHE) and the government on this matter,

9. How will the school enforce strict rules about the health of the attending children so that they do not risk passing on infections to others?

Clear messages will be sent to parents that pupils should not be sent into school if unwell for both Covid-19 and any other illness/symptoms. There will be regular reminders and enforcements of these messages. Staff will remain vigilant and are aware of the many signs to look out for and will act according to school guidelines, to protect the health of all school members.

10. Will you have the school nurse check each child for any symptoms before allowing him/her back in school?

No – there is no capacity for this locally

11. What will happen if children feel a bit "under the weather" but without any obvious signs of Coronavirus. How long will they have to stay away from school?

The usual school procedure for this will be in place, but, if in doubt, we suggest parents keep their child at home for the child's emotional wellbeing as well as physical health. In the current times, your child will benefit from staying at home if they are not feeling 100%.

Cleaning

12. What is being done about cleaning classrooms and common areas?

- A sanitation kit is available in each classroom/area and checked daily
- Age appropriate pupil cleaning routines will be built into the daily routines
- Areas of the school that are used by different bubbles (ICT suite, corridors, entrance areas & toilets) will have additional cleaning by adults during the school day.
- Soaps, hand sanitiser and Antibacterial wipes are in all rooms
- Children will clean their own table and chair at specified times of day e.g. before/after lunch etc.
- Each Friday the school is closed (except for key worker children) to enable the sanitisation of communal areas and resources that may be used the following week before the new group of children start.
- Some normal school activities and resources will not be available during this time if hygiene is difficult to maintain and safety could be compromised (Lego, small maths resources, specific PE lessons)

13. Is it possible for toilets to be cleaned every time between use?

This is not practically possible. Toilet areas will be regularly monitored for cleanliness. All pupils will be encouraged to develop excellent hygiene habits. Pupils will be reminded of safe and healthy toilet routines. There are identified toilets for each class bubble and control systems are in place to ensure they are used safely. We will be restricting the number of people using the toilets at the same time. Many older pupils are in a routine of waiting until break time or lunchtime to use the toilet, staff will encourage pupils to use the toilet when they need to rather than just at these times. Throughout, and at the end of the day there is enhanced cleaning of all facilities.

14. Will the class be thoroughly cleaned after each day?

Yes, thorough cleaning of rooms will take place at the end of the day. There is an adapted cleaning schedule throughout the site to ensure that frequent contact points, e.g. door handles, taps, flush handles, toilet door handles, bannisters, telephones, keyboards etc. are all thoroughly cleaned and disinfected regularly during the day. Pupils will use the same chair and desk throughout their week in school, their desk, chair and all surfaces and edges within the classrooms will get increased cleaning each evening. A further sanitisation of areas and resources will take place at the end of the week in preparation for the new group coming to school the next day.

Handwashing

15. Is there hand sanitizer and antibacterial hand wash available?

Alcohol based hand sanitiser and / or washing facilities will be provided at the school building entrances. This is to be used by everyone when entering the school buildings without exception. Pupils will all wash their hands, on entry to the classroom. Soap dispensers will be regularly filled, and there will be obligatory hand washing following correct guidance regularly throughout the day. Alcohol hand sanitiser is available in each classroom and in ICT suite, if soap and water is not available.

16. How will one sink be shared between 30 children?

As with the toilet area, pupil presence in this area will be restricted. Please note that the maximum number of children in any of our rooms is 13 and, in some rooms, will be much lower. Pupils will be directed to socially distance hand washing throughout the day.

17. How will they be able to wash their hands regularly?

Children will wash their hands, on entry to and exit from their classroom, before and after snack time and before eating lunch, before and after playtime/lunchtime, after any PE or outdoor activity, after using the ICT suite and after using the toilet. Time will be built into the timetable to ensure this happens. There are displays next to the sink to remind children how to wash their hands properly. As before the school closures, pupils with sensitive skin can bring hand creams which they will keep in the tray on their desk for their own personal use.

PPE and face masks

18. Will staff wear PPE?

Staff will not wear PPE unless they are administering first aid or intimate care e.g. changing nappies. Intimate care / medical stations are in key, ventilated areas with PPE equipment available (including gloves, disposable apron, fluid resistant masks and face shields).

19. Will staff and children wear masks?

Following Public Health England guidance, masks/face coverings are not required to be worn in school. However, we recognise that staff may choose to wear masks as a personal preference. A child must be able to fully use one without compromising their health and safety.

20. How can you help my child who may be scared by a member of staff wearing PPE?

There are a limited number of reasons when PPE must be worn as detailed above, it is unlikely a child will encounter any adult wearing PPE. Any child who may have intimate care needs will be thoroughly prepared and reassured before any PPE equipment is worn in their presence, and the adult will fully reassure children throughout any intimate care procedure.

Children's emotional wellbeing and mental health

21. How can you support my child's mental health?

The children's emotional wellbeing and mental health is our key focus and priority as they return to school. We are a nurturing, caring community and this will continue, albeit in different circumstances. When children come back to school, they will have had a wide range of experience during lockdown and we will take time to listen, play and meet our children where they are. We understand that children may be worried or anxious about coming back and this is perfectly natural. They are coming back to a school which is set up in a different way to the one they left. We will be focusing on wellbeing and reconnecting with other adults, children, learning and the curriculum. We will be monitoring their well being very carefully and completing a range of activities to give them opportunities to share and learn about their feelings.

In discussions with parents/carers, we may reduce time in school to ensure transition is successful from home.

We will have to give lots of opportunities for children of all ages to play and have fun and will gradually increase the 'academic' or 'cognitive load' of learning as we work through this transition process.

If there is anything you are specifically concerned about with regards to your child's mental health and wellbeing, please let us know so we can fully support them, likewise we will maintain good

communication with parents where any issues have been noticed, by email or phone calls. It will not be possible for discussions to take place at school.

22. Can you share resources around children's mental health?

Resources to support children's mental health are available on the school website and the Hertfordshire local offer website. As more become available they are sent out via Parentmail, put on the school website and on the school Twitter feed. If you require something specific, please let us know.

23. How can you support my child if you cannot give them a hug when needed?

Children (and adults) communicate their feelings in a variety of ways, likewise reassurance, support and care can also be given through different channels. Pupil wellbeing and emotional security is a priority, maintaining a calm and supportive environment within the bubble, will build pupil trust; staff have focused on preparing tasks, activities, games and conversations that can take place as a whole class, in groups or 1:1 to deal safely with anxieties that will occur. If a child needs parental support we would act accordingly. We will continue to prioritise a nurturing approach.

Attendance

24. Will children be required to go to school daily?

Children whose parents are key workers will continue to use the key worker email to book their child in as required. Please inform the school office if your child is unable to attend school on their allocated day and the reasons why; absences will be authorised.

Children in **Rec, Y1 and Y6** will be in school **every other week** but will **not be in school on Fridays**.

25. Why will different year groups start on different days?

Governors have committed to a cautious approach to increasing pupil numbers on site. As such we want the opportunity to adapt our procedures over time. Reception children will start a week later as we still haven't received Government advice specific to the youngest pupils; this has been promised for some time and is beyond our control.

26. Why will start/end times be staggered?

Start / end times are staggered to reduce the number of additional adults on site at any time. This should reduce congestion and make social distancing more possible. If you have children in two groups you may choose which of the two windows of time to arrive at. These timings will be confirmed by the middle of half term.

27. What if I have children in two different year groups or twins in different classes?

Siblings in Rec, Year 1 and Year 6 will be allocated to bubbles that attend on the same day.

28. Can we change our mind if we initially said no to our child returning?

Yes but the school must be informed in advance to ensure that we can keep to the correct class group (bubble) size, classrooms are limited to the number of pupils that can safely use the room. An immediate start may not be possible. Attendance may be limited, depending on staffing and room capacity.

Class size and organisation

29. How will you fit the children into the small classrooms?

Each room has been set up to ensure that a distance of two metres is maintained between children. There is a maximum of pupils in each classroom but the group (bubble) size is dependent upon the size of the room (10 – 13 children in our school). If necessary, we are using extra rooms to ensure the maximum permitted bubble size is not exceeded. 'Unnecessary' equipment and furniture has been removed from the room to accommodate this.

30. Will children be in their usual classrooms?

As we are splitting classes into smaller groups (bubbles), they will be in their own classroom or in a nearby classroom.

31. Can some lessons occur outside?

Yes.

32. Can my child bring in their own pencil case?

No. Children will be supplied with their own, personal stationery pack (books, pens etc) and equipment in their own tray, which has been cleaned.

Children can bring in a lunchbox, snack, named water bottle and coat. It is really important that no other items go back and forth between school and home.

Pupils will not bring any completed tasks or reading books home from school.

Staffing

33. Will there be a member of staff in the class that my child knows?

We are endeavouring to ensure this happens. There are teams of staff for each bubble. If fewer staff become available, it may be that a less well-known member of staff will be in the team.

34. How are you keeping staff safe?

A full risk assessment has been carried out, ratified by Governors and shared with staff. Staff were consulted throughout the whole process.

Daily movement

35. What are the procedures for drop off and pick up? How will crowding be avoided?

The following procedures are in place:

- Staggered start and finish times to reduce congestions and contact at all times.
- School site one-way system - in by front gate, out by back gate.
- Staff presence on the gates.
- Social distancing markings along pathways.
- Y6 pupils enter the school alone (also good transition preparation).
- Other year groups have one parent only to drop off /pick up.

36. How will children move around the school?

The following procedures are in place:

- Minimised transition, all transition pre-planned (no two classes using the same outdoor areas or travelling along corridors at the same time)
- One-way systems for movement around the school
- 2m social distancing marked in corridors
- Pupils will not be moving around the school building alone (no messages to other classrooms or the office)
- Lunch will be eaten in classrooms

Eating

37. Will there be a meal provided?

Herts Catering will provide a cold packed lunch (with a daily choice of filling options) which will be delivered to the classroom. Alternatively, children can bring in a packed lunch, which will be kept in their locker until lunch collection time.

38. Where will children eat? Will they be able to self distance when they are eating?

We will not be making use of the dining room.

The children will prepare their own desk before lunch, wash hands, collect their lunch and sit at their designated classroom space to eat their lunch. The class teacher will also be with the pupils during this time.

Following eating they will clean their area; wash their hands; and at the allocated time go outside with the rest of their bubble with an adult. They will not be using the same outside space as another bubble.

Playground

39. How will they interact with children on the playground whilst being socially distant?

The following procedures are in place:

- Breaktime and lunchtimes are different for different bubbles.
- Bubbles will be assigned areas on the playground and supervised by staff from their bubble.
- There will not be any contact group games
- Staff will work with pupils to create suitable, enjoyable playtime activities that involve safe interaction.
- Pupils will be well aware of the social distancing expectations and helped to maintain them.
- Each bubble will have their own set of outdoor equipment which will be cleaned each day during the week and further sanitised each Friday in preparation for the next group of children
- Large outdoor play equipment is not being used before, during or after school

40. Will there be handwashing facilities outside?

No, but they will wash their hands immediately on entering the classroom after playtime and lunchtime. Hand sanitiser will be available if required.

Key workers

41. Are there plans to still offer a space for children of key workers, not in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 before September?

Yes. Key worker days and times remain unchanged. These places are booked via the key email (keyworker@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) in the usual way.

Key worker children will be in their own bubbles. It will not be possible to move between bubbles as this could potentially damage the integrity of the bubble.

Provision has been made for Key Worker children to attend on a Friday when the school is closed to all other pupils should this be required.

Distance learning

42. Are there any opportunity for online classes?

Home learning will continue in a similar format e.g. via Purple Mash and other assigned activities. Daily lessons are also available through the Oak Academy materials that have been shared and through the BBC on-line daily lessons that have been shared.

43. Can online learning be emailed before the start of the week?

White Rose Maths is emailed at the weekend when released.

Inclusion

44. How will you support SEN children with transitioning to their new year group?

Children with SEN who find transition hard will still have transition significantly prioritised albeit this may be remotely through the use of photographs etc of their new classroom for September.

This will be arranged for individual children as part of their Personalised Provision Plan.

Academic learning

45. Will the children be educated or just cared for?

Our priority is always the pupils' mental and physical wellbeing and even more so as we face the current challenges. Education of a variety of curriculum areas will continue but some subject areas may be limited due to equipment needs and teaching methods. The school will work towards inclusive, achievable learning tasks, minimising anxiety whilst allowing pupils to thrive and take pride in their achievements.

As always, we will aim for all pupils to learn appropriately without anxiety. Personal and social education are a priority in the first instance alongside a focus on core areas of the curriculum. Government documentation supports this through a 'Thrive Curriculum' approach.

46. If school does not return, what work will be set so they don't fall behind?

Online work e.g. through Purple Mash, White Rose maths etc will continue to be set by teachers each week. Teachers will be ensuring as far as possible that home learning mirrors that taking place in class. Individual issues with access to the curriculum must be shared with the class teacher and senior leaders.

47. If I decide to keep my child at home, how will the school ensure that they won't fall behind?

We will continue to provide appropriate online work. When your child returns to school, one of our roles will be to assess where they are at and support them to make progress. It is important to note that whatever happens, 'catch up' will not occur before the end of term regardless of whether your child is in school or not.

Early Years

48. What will the school day look like for Reception children?

In Reception, there will be a maximum of 10 children in each bubble. The classroom has been zoned to aid social distancing. Learning through carefully structured 'play' tasks will continue and although some resources have been limited or removed, EYFS practitioners have planned suitable tasks to ensure a variety of learning opportunities.

Safe use and additional cleaning procedures will take place and each Friday resources will be carefully prepared for use of the next group (bubble).

The use of the EYFS outdoor area will be one bubble at a time, with time allocated for cleaning before the next bubble use equipment.

49. Can an online journal tool such as Tapestry or Seesaw be used to share and get feedback?

This is currently not in our plans. Teachers have been responding to parents via email and to children via Purple Mash. Now is not the time for school staff to be taking on new tools.

Communication

50. Can you keep parents up to date on class sizes?

Government advice is that bubbles should not exceed 15 children. We have risk assessed that our bubbles, based on the space available in our classrooms, will be between 10 and 13 pupils. We will keep this under regular review in accordance with government advice.

51. Can you keep parents up to date on what other parents think?

We do not have the capacity to share this information, but we have responded to all the issues raised. Parental questions posed in the survey have been answered in this document. We would hope that any parent would contact the school directly if they have any further questions, concerns or positive comments. If any of these lead to changes in daily practice, we would inform the school community of changes or adaptations that may take place. Parents can use parent reps and/or social media already in place for this but please note that these are non-official sources.

Transition

52. Could there be any kind of transition procedures/direct communication put in place for Year 6 moving onto secondary school?

We recognise the difficulties, anxieties and excitement that many of our Year 6 families feel. Secondary schools are currently liaising with Y6 staff to identify ways to support the transition process for Y6 children and we will implement and support any transition we are able to.