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**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020**

## **AN UPDATE FROM LEMINGTON RIVERSIDE**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are safe and well and that you have managed to share some enjoyable moments in the half term sunshine. The unprecedented situation we all find ourselves in is unlike any other we have seen in our lifetimes. I can certainly say that, as a school, this has been and continues to be, the greatest challenge we have ever faced. You will no doubt have been following Government updates regarding plans for the partial reopening of primary schools. I want to assure you that, as a school, the safety and wellbeing of all our children and staff is our priority. I am writing to you today to share our initial plans for the partial reopening of Lemington Riverside Primary School.

We are using Government and Local Authority guidance to support us in making decisions to enable our site to be as safe as possible for the partial re-opening of school. The guidance we receive is often updated at short notice; it may therefore be necessary for us to amend our plans in line with any changes, as each week progresses.

Based on our extensive risk assessment work and in line with decisions made alongside other Outer West Learning Trust schools, we are planning to open to **Year 6 pupils from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June**. We believe that a partial reopening from this date will allow us to monitor the infection rate across the North East and is a safer option for our children given that we also hope by then to have a greater reassurance that the national 'Track and Trace' system is up and running. While the Government are currently suggesting pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could potentially return to school, we continue to believe that the decision to focus on Year 6 is the safest option. We are working tirelessly to ensure that all safety measures are in place in school, based on the Department for Education guidance and our own risk assessment of our staff and school building.



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School will continue to be open for the children of key workers and for some of our more vulnerable pupils, as it has been throughout this national crisis. For the vast majority of our pupils, we regret to say that school continues to be closed. We understand that this will present many challenges for parents and we look forward to a time when we can reopen to all of our brilliant children.

I am sure many of you have questions about our plans for the coming weeks and also about the routines and procedures we will have in place in order to keep your child safe when they return to school. I will be writing to our Year 6 parents later this week to outline detailed plans for our partial reopening to Year 6 only. In the meantime, I have attached some questions and answers to this letter which I hope will provide some clarity to parents around what children and families can expect from school in the coming weeks.

We all understand that this is a worrying and uncertain time for many people. I know you will all agree that the children remain the main priority for all of us. Let's continue to work together to role model resilience and positivity during these challenging times. Thank you once again for your patience and support – it is very much appreciated.

Take care,

**Mr. Heeley**  
**Head Teacher**



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## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Partial Reopening of Lemington Riverside Primary School from 15<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **School continues to be closed for my child because they are not in Year 6. How can I best support them?**

For most children, the beginning of the summer term marks their third half term away from full time education. We share your concerns regarding the amount of learning time your child has now missed in school and I want to thank you for the support you have given your child with their learning during this challenging period. The happiness and wellbeing of your child continues to be the most important thing for you to focus on during this time away from school however we would also encourage all parents to support their child in completing the home learning tasks set by their class teacher on the private year group Facebook groups that have been set up (see our website for the direct links); they have been carefully planned to recap on key skills covered this year and any work your child is able to complete now will really help them when they return to school.

#### **My child is in Year 6. Do they have to attend school? No**

It is **not** compulsory that any child attends school at this time so you must do what you feel is right for your child and for your family circumstances. We will respect and support whichever decision you come to and will answer any questions you may have to support you in this.

#### **The Government suggested that children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could return to school. Why are you only opening to Year 6 pupils?**

The safety and wellbeing of children and staff is our priority as we plan the phased reopening of school. There are many reasons why we have decided not to open to Reception and Year 1. To begin with, any return to school would undoubtedly be most challenging for our youngest pupils who need to feel and supported and safe in order to grow and develop. We provide a nurturing and stimulating learning environment in our Early Years setting and, in normal times, children work with dedicated key staff whom they have built positive and stable relationships with. Unfortunately, Governments guidance for the phased reopening of primary schools means that we would be unable to guarantee that children will be working with a known adult, and would mean that classroom environments are unfamiliar and very different to the norm. In the coming weeks, classroom routines will also be significantly different to those children are used to and we believe this could cause further distress for our youngest learners at an already difficult time.

A huge part of the early years of school relies staff who are safe and secure in their ability to be physically close to the children in order to provide appropriate care, encouragement and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, staff would not currently be able to



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provide the warm interactions that we believe are essential in helping children to feel supported and less anxious, due to safety restrictions in place.

Government guidelines insist that soft furnishings, many toys, materials, games and equipment must be removed from learning environments. Such plans would not allow us to provide a classroom space that supports stimulating and exciting social interaction and learning.

Finally, let's not forget that a huge part of children's early experiences in school centre on opportunities for friendships to blossom and peer to peer support to be properly nurtured. Regrettably social distancing and small grouping restrictions would not allow for an environment conducive to this. We do not believe that young children would be given the level of support and care they would require in normal times, let alone during this anxious and uncertain period.

By contrast, our oldest pupils have established themselves at our school and have a secure network of close friends and peers, as well as being familiar with our wider staff team. They will understand and be able to act on social distancing advice; it would be unfair and quite unrealistic to expect our youngest children to do the same. We could therefore not guarantee their safety and wellbeing which, as we have said, is always our priority.

### **What can my child expect when they first return to school?**

The first week of our partial reopening will be very much about supporting the children's return to school; sharing and understanding new routines; and ensuring that children feel safe and settled after a long period away from their teachers and friends. The school day will be very different for children in the coming weeks and we will be spending a lot of time supporting children with this.

Our pupils' wellbeing and happiness is always our priority. We recognise that it has been a very long time since your child has been at school and it is natural that they may be anxious and find it difficult to separate from their parents and families. We understand that it is a particularly strange and difficult time for them. We will continue to be nurturing, gentle, positive, calm and offer as much reassurance as possible during this transition back into school.

### **Will my child return to their usual classroom with their Year 6 teacher? Yes**

Children in Year 6 will continue to be taught by Mr. Murphy in their normal classroom. However, social distancing measures will be in place.

### **Will there be a change to the timings of the school day? Yes**

Children in Year 6 will be in school on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9:15am and 3pm. The school will be closed to all but children of key workers, those with an allocated social worker and those with an Education & Health Care Plan on a Friday so that the Year 6 classroom space can have a thorough deep clean ready for the following week.



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### **Will the classroom look different? Yes**

Our classrooms will look very different once school has reopened to some pupils. Much of the furniture and many other items that may be difficult to clean will have been removed. Children will sit at single desks that are spaced apart. Windows and doors will be kept open to ensure better ventilation. Hand sanitiser will be available in the classroom and hand washing stations will be close by.

### **Will playtime/ lunchtimes be different? Yes**

There will be regular breaks outside for all children and outdoor learning will be encouraged. Children will have all breaks and lunchtime with children and staff in their own bubble. No bubbles will mix at any time. Any games where children come into close proximity to each other, such as football, will not be allowed. Children should aim to maintain a 2 metre distance from all other children and adults at all times when outside.

### **Will there be breakfast and/or after school care? No**

We are unable to staff this provision at the moment.

### **Will there be extra cleaning happening in school? Yes**

We will follow the *COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance* and ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available. Where a sink is not nearby, we will provide hand sanitiser.

We will regularly clean surfaces that pupils are touching, such as toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches and bannisters.

We will ensure that all adults and children are frequently washing their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and that hands are dried thoroughly. Children and staff in school will clean their hands on arrival at school, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing. They will be encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose and use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it').

Where possible, all spaces will be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows). We will prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation.

### **What happens if someone in the bubble is ill?**

If anyone in the bubble shows signs of COVID 19 then they will be isolated and sent home immediately. Their temperature may be taken. They must self-isolate and get a test. Only when the result of this test shows they do not have the infection they can return to school. If the test is positive, then the whole group (including staff) will be informed and must also self-isolate for 14 days.



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### **Can I change my mind about returning to school? Yes and No**

If you inform us that you would rather wait and continue with home learning you need to keep to that decision for a full week. If you change your mind and would like a school place then we need to know by Wednesday at the latest for your child to start the following Monday to enable staffing organisation and your child's personal work station to be set up.

### **Does my child need to wear school uniform? No**

At this time children are free to wear their own choice of clothes. They should wear fresh, clean clothes every day.

### **Are parents allowed into school? No**

To ensure we keep the risk of spreading the virus to a minimum, no visitors will be allowed into the school without prior arrangement. Only **essential** communication with staff can happen from a 2 metre distance at the drop off and pick-up zone located at the top of Sugley Street (the large vehicle entrance) – no other entrances or exits will be in use until further notice. All other messages should be communicated with school via phone call (**0191 267 4315**) or email ([admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk)). In order to limit the number of parents at the drop-off/pick-up zone at any one time, we are asking for only one parent/carer to drop off or collect children if they are unable to walk to school themselves.

### **How can I contact school?**

It is essential that **no adult visits the school office without prior appointment. We are able to take phone calls in the office between 9am** If you have a matter that you wish to discuss outside of these hours, please contact school via email, using the following address: [admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:admin@lemingtonriverside.newcastle.sch.uk) and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

**Don't forget to follow our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages for the latest updates from school.**



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