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Dear Parents and Carers,

First of all I want to say thankyou for the support and gratitude shown by so many of you towards staff during this period. It has been a strange time for everybody . The level of our children's response to the home learning has been far higher than is reported in many schools across the country. An overwhelming majority of our children have regularly engaged with their learning which is an enormous relief for me and the teachers knowing that basic skills have been consolidated. I know that when we embark on the road back the loss of learning through not being in school has been minimised. Children who have been attending school have been engaging with their learning in the same way as those at home so children at home have not missed out in any way.

I hope you are all well and safe and still in good spirits. We know that some families have suffered loss during this time and our hearts and prayers go out to them. We also know that many families have flourished during this time and previously abandoned skills in craft and cooking have been resurrected and shared with the younger generation.

The main purpose of this letter is to outline the next steps **we are likely to take** as a school and to share as much information with you all as we possibly can. As you will no doubt have seen in the news, schools are being encouraged to open for children in Foundation, Year 1 and Year 6, as well as opening for vulnerable children and children of Key Workers. The government are suggesting that children can safely work in groups of up to fifteen children. We feel this is contrary to other government advice. In order to protect the children, the families that they will go home to at the end of the day and the staff working with them, we have decided to maintain the two metre social distancing guidance throughout the school when we embark on wider opening. To maintain distancing between children and children, and children and adults, the maximum we can fit in any classroom is nine children. Plymouth CAST, our Multi Academy Trust, have advised schools to prioritise the children of key workers, vulnerable children and year 6 children first. Accommodating all of those children will mean that we will have to use all rooms, and staff, available to us leaving **no facility to offer schooling to children in Year 1 or the Foundation Stage.** Those are the plans we are working on with a planned start date of June 1st as long as the national wider opening of schools is recommended nationally. I realise that this will be disappointing for parents and children in the Foundation Class and Year 1 who may have been looking forward to coming back to school. I apologise for causing any disappointment but cannot apologise for putting the safety of children and staff at the core of our planning.

I will now outline some of the measures we will be putting in place to ensure the wider opening of our school is as safe as it can be for the children, families and staff involved

The 'Bubbles' or 'Pods'

Every school that I know of is planning to use the 'bubble' or 'pod' idea to minimise the number of people that anybody can be in contact with. All children will be placed in a pod who will stay together in the same classroom for learning, play and lunch. The same adults will stay with their pod throughout the day. Breaks outside and lunch times will be staggered between groups as will the arrival and departure times.

Start and End times and procedures

There will **not** be breakfast club or after school club provisions. This is because of the reasons stated above. It would be impossible to keep children in their pods. The children attending school will be allocated a pod which will be named and have a specific class allocated to them.

Start times and end times will be as follows:

	Start Time	End Time
Pod A - Year 6 class	08:40- 08:45	15:00
Pod G - Foundation Class	08:40- 08:45	15:00
Pod B - Year 5 Class	08:50 - 08:55	15:10
Pod F - Year 1 Class	08:50 - 08:55	15:10
Pod C - Year 4 Class	09:00 - 09:05	15:20
Pod E - Year 2 Class	09:00 - 09:05	15:20
Pod D - Year 3 Class	09:00 - 09:05	15:20

It is imperative that times are kept to for this to work. Once pods have been allocated to key worker or vulnerable children we will bear in mind any factors beyond your control such as shift patterns which may affect your ability to meet the times allocated.

At the start and end of each day we will have both sets of gates (Chapel St and Raglan Rd) open. An adult will be on duty near both. If your child can be relied upon to go to their meeting place once on site that is what will happen. For adults who need to come on site we will use the pedestrian gates as the exit gates and the vehicle gates for entrance (please take care when entering from the road on the Chapel St side). There will be markings on the floor for you to wait outside the class that your child is based in and this is where you should wait when collecting your child at the allocated time. Whilst on the school grounds we will ask adults to keep to strict social distancing guidelines avoid passing too close to another family and not gather for chats etc either on the premises or outside.

Safety in school

Regular handwashing will be a strong feature of any wider opening of schools. We will not encourage the use of gloves or other PPE for children as the removal of such equipment during the day offers a greater risk that the equipment provides. Each pod will only need to be in the classroom and in a dedicated outside area with separate toilets allocated to different pods. They will have their own set of resources for each day and will not need to share these with other children. Regular cleaning systems will be put in place, particularly as far as regular 'touch points' such as taps and door handles are concerned.

Uniform

We will not be expecting uniform to be worn. Children may wear their own clothes though these should be suitable for exercising in as we intend to incorporate outside PE lessons into the day. If a coat is needed it will be kept in each child's allocated space rather than in the cloakroom. We intend using the outdoor environment, so sun safe measures such as hats and suncream should be provided for each child however staff will not be applying sun cream on children. To prevent spreading the virus children should be wearing clean clothes each day. At the end of the school day, it would be good practice for your child to strip their clothes off, have a shower and put clean clothes on. The clothes they wore to school then should be washed immediately.

Free School Meals

During the lockdown period we have been delivering weekly hampers to families eligible for Free School Meals. We will not have the resources to continue this service. Our initial plans are for families of children who are not in school

to be given a time slot to come and collect their hamper each Monday. Children who are in school will be offered a grab bag type lunch that will be delivered to be eaten in the classroom or as a picnic outside. Home packed lunches can still be brought in. Water fountains will be turned off so we would like each child to bring in their own, named, water bottle every day.

Some parents have required support during this uncertain time. People will have been furloughed, or even lost their jobs. If you are worried about your finances, you may well qualify for Free School Meals. Please contact the office if you would like further information about this.

Behaviour

The behaviour of children who have been in school so far has been exemplary and they have shown great awareness of social distancing expectations. New rules and procedures will be added to the behaviour policy to reflect the new needs of keeping everybody in school safe.

Learning

If your child is not in school, learning will still be in place remotely as it has been since we started lockdown. The children in school will be engaging with the same learning. As more teachers will be in school and actively involved with children each day replies to queries may not be as prompt as they have been but we do have some staff who cannot work in school still and they will take on a little more of that load from the class based teachers. Next week (beginning 25th May) is half term and so no home learning will be set for that week.

Contacting the school/visitors

Parents will not be allowed to enter the school building under any circumstances. If you would like to speak with a member of staff, you may request to do so on the playground at the end of a school day from a safe distance but the best option would be through e-mail, or phone conversation.

There may be times where visitors will be on site. They will be given clear instructions about our protocols and policies and surfaces such as door handles etc. that they touch will be wiped down and cleaned.

Final note from me

It goes without saying that this is unusual for us all. There is great anxiety about June 1st, for parents and for staff. It is YOUR choice to send your child in if they fit into one of the categories allowed. We realise it is not an easy choice and there will be no penalty imposed if your child does not return. Please do not feel any guilt or worry that other children are going back but you are deciding to keep your child at home. Your child is your whole world and nothing other than their safety and wellbeing matters. As outlined in this letter, we will do EVERYTHING in our powers to keep your child safe whilst in our care. Again I apologise to parents whose expectations of a return to school have been scuppered but the plans we have prepared are what we consider to be the safest way of beginning our wider opening procedures. We do not know how long these initial limited measures will be in place for. These are baby steps and if it all goes to plan, we will hopefully see more children in school as the weeks go by.

I will be in touch as and when more information needs to be shared. Please continue to be vigilant and follow the guidelines from the government. As positive as some of the data is, we are still not out of the woods and we must be cautious in everything we do. I must stress that this is the likely plan and it could well change as a result of government, trust policy or other local circumstances.

On behalf of the staff team, we miss your children and hope and pray that circumstances will allow us to see them all as soon as it is safe to do so.

Best wishes

BJ Gill