



Archdiocese of Birmingham

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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19th May 2020

Dear Parent

Schools Opening:

As you are aware, the schools have been asked to open – with the *earliest date* for this to happen being 1st June (this is not necessarily the *actual* date, at the time of writing).

Last week a 'yes'/'no' survey/questionnaire was sent out to those of you who have a child in **Reception, Y1 or Y6** – the year groups targeted by the government. The survey indicates that currently, many of you intend to keep your children safely at home. We would support you in doing this and await the government publication of the scientific evidence that supports their decision in asking schools to return.

Our priority has to be the safety of children, families and staff and, as I am sure you will appreciate, this is made more difficult by the many unknowns and uncertainties that still exist around the Covid-19 virus. We are in the initial stages of processing this latest government guidance and applying it to St Mary's, considering the physical space we have for this increased number of pupils and with the staffing that we have available.

There have been a number of comments about our risk assessments and the plans we have in place to protect the children.

So, for absolute clarity, all I can say is that we will do our best in the circumstances we are in. We are not medical experts and we do not know how this will fare going forward – we cannot provide total assurances that your child will not become unwell because we do not know.

What we do know, and what you need to understand, is that we will *do our utmost* to keep children at the required social distance: they will not be returning to school as they previously understood it -

- they will not be together as a class group – rather they will be in small groups – which they will remain in with an adult who may not be their teacher;
- cleaning will be going on around them at very frequent intervals;
- playtimes will be staggered throughout the day for small groups;
- toileting (and the frequent washing of hands) will be monitored and staggered for the same reasons
- lunchtimes (cold lunches only provided for eligible children – you will be informed if it applies to you) and drop off/pick up will be staggered;
- we will be taking children's temperatures on arrival and any child with a high one will be asked to go home;
- items of clothing and all personal belongings must be taken off site each evening and washed – these MUST be named to avoid children putting on the wrong item of clothing and increasing potential contamination.
- There will be no breakfast club or after school provision for the duration of this term.
- Parents will need to **queue** to collect their child at the end of each day because the distancing rules apply to us all – we will be indicating where this lining up will be and will expect full compliance from parents in terms of distancing and timings.

We do not underestimate the difficulties that we have ahead of us and we need to work together to make this as safe as possible. Children who do not respect or respond to the rules will be asked to stay away until such time as they do understand the health and safety implications their actions may

6th week of Eastertide



cause. It is crucial that children know that these regulations are in place to protect them and all those around them, especially the adults working in school.

We do intend to sustain the home learning while we have sufficient staff at home to do so.

We currently have 7 staff who will be unable to work within the school setting – they will continue to support home-learning.

I hope you will appreciate that all this places the school in a precarious situation should all children be encouraged to return before the end of this school year, as the government is proposing. From our risk assessments so far (once completed, these will be on our website), as well as the confines of our site to maintain social distancing, it is extremely unlikely that all children will be able to return unless the guidance on social distancing changes radically.

We have the necessary cleaning aids on order and we will only open when they have been delivered to us. We have been waiting for quite some time already!



On a lighter note, we do not intend our children to wear hats like these – as seen in a school in China 😊!

Week beginning	What is happening?
18 th May 2020	School open for key worker children
25 th May 2020	School CLOSED to all pupils/ staff for half term
1 st June	School open for key worker children
8 th June	Proposed wider opening for key worker and Reception children only.
15 th June	EARLIEST possible date for Y1 children to return - TBC

Washing Hands! *It is crucial that, as we prepare to return to school in some form, that the children are really well trained in hand washing – 20 seconds with soap, in between fingers etc. If it is the single most important thing to do to protect ourselves (as we have been told), then it is the single most important preparation/training **you can provide** to your child in order to help us all stay safe when we return. PLEASE ensure they know that they ONLY need to press the soap pump ONCE!*

May is dedicated to our Blessed Mother, Mary

Ascension Thursday

This week we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven. It is a holyday of obligation and the children and staff in school will share in Mass together at 12.15 – St Chad's online streaming. Please share with us. Perhaps we could all offer our mass for those who have died during these few months of the pandemic and for those who remain very ill.

The God who Speaks to us... 'love one another as I love you.'

Yours sincerely,

H M Cusack

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