



Archdiocese of Birmingham

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Miss H.M. Cusack M.Ed.



15th May 2020

Dear Parent,

Following the Prime Minister's statement that schools may be due to open for our youngest and oldest children from 1st June, we - as the senior leaders of St Mary's - are in the process of attempting to make plans for some of these children to return.

We need clearer guidance to plan how it is possible to social distance in school and keep our children, staff and families safe; how we might start to phase groups of children returning and what this looks like. Please be assured we will only reopen to more pupils when it is safe for us to do so. We are considering beginning with one year group at a time and government priority is for the youngest to be considered first. We, therefore, will begin with our reception children as they are, without doubt, the most difficult to support in terms of the distancing that will be required. Any children who may compromise the safety of others due to them being unable to follow school expectations at this critical time, will not be allowed to return until the situation has calmed significantly.

We are in the midst of a great deal of conflicting advice and guidance. This is a summary of the current situation – please note it is *guidance only* and is subject to interpretation and change:

- The government have told us we must re-open to Reception, Y1 and Y6 pupils from 1st June - we received this news on Sunday at 7pm just like the rest of the country
- They have said we must carry out a full risk assessment for the re-opening
- They have published three separate guidance documents for us to use, but much of this is still open to individual interpretation of school leaders
- Latest guidance released last night suggests schools have ALL pupils from the priority year groups back in full time – this will be 180 pupils for us, plus our key worker/vulnerable children.
- The LA asked leaders to wait for an agreed LA risk assessment to be released before we plan - city wide meetings yesterday advised this will not be ready until the middle of next week
- Teacher unions are advising their teaching staff to refuse to take part in any plans for re-opening until further, and more definitive, guidance is released
- Teachers are anxious to know how many children they will have to prepare for, what they are going to teach, how they are going to manage social distancing and keeping their children and themselves safe
- Some staff are self-isolating or shielding because they, or members of their family, are critically vulnerable - meaning we do not have a full complement of staff
- 1st June is two weeks away, and one of those weeks is a school 'holiday', so time is of the essence.
- We are currently attempting to find out how many children we should expect in this first tranche of returning children.



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We continue to provide care for those parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response and only those that cannot be safely cared for at home. If you are still working at home and are not a key worker, it remains the expectation that you keep your child safe at home. To this end, St Mary's School remains closed to most children until further notice. Our on-line learning will continue for as long as we can manage to staff it and it is required.

Please note that this refers to school day only – there is NO breakfast club or after school provision at the present time.

Fundamentally, our prime remit is to ensure the safety of children and staff and our plans will be built on this.

Thank you for your support and patience in these uncertain times. Stay safe and keep alert.

Yours sincerely

H M Cusack
Headteacher