



## St Mary's Church of England School

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Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Parents,

### Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 return to school

I am writing to you following the latest Government guidance, issued on 18 June, giving primary schools some additional flexibility on welcoming back more children this term. Given this, I wanted to share with you our current thinking on the return to school of children in Years 2 - 5.

Providing there are no significant changes to Government guidance based on the recent Covid-19 alert level change and upon ratification of the risk assessment by the Governing Body, as of the week beginning 29<sup>th</sup> June, we plan to invite back children in Years 2 - 5 on a part time basis. Years 2, 3 and 4 will be invited back for a half day each week; Year 5 will be invited back for a whole day. This group have been prioritised for more time in school as a result of the demands Year 6 brings and readying them for secondary school. All will be taught by a teacher in pods of no more than 15 children.

Years R, 1 and 6 will continue in school on Wednesdays to Fridays. Further details on timings and logistics will be shared next week. Please do note, however, that like children in Reception, Year 1 and 6, pupils will remain in their group of 15 and will not be allowed to socialise with other groups. There will inevitably be friends in different groups, but the safety of pupils is our priority.

### Why is it changing?

We are making this change for two reasons:

- **Children's mental health and wellbeing:** we are acutely aware of the impact lockdown and School's closure has had on families and children. We know that being away from school for 14 weeks will have proven a significant challenge for many and recognise that a further 10 weeks (including the summer holidays) could well result in a deterioration in mental health. It is for this reason that we have decided to invite children back for a small amount of time on a regular basis. We plan for this return – albeit less class time than we would like – to focus on wellbeing and re-familiarising children with school life and helping them understand (as Reception, Years 1 and 6 have) that school is the safe, nurturing place it has always been.
- **Local cases of COVID-19 have reached very low levels:** despite the continued tragic loss of life as a result of COVID-19, local case numbers are some of the lowest in the country. They have remained this way despite the reopening of schools and the relaxation of lockdown measures. This, coupled with the School's robust hygiene regime, means we now feel confident – as do staff – to allow teachers to teach more than one pod of children. Previously, these concerns had prevented us opening up school to more children.

### Why not more time in school?

We still are subject to strict guidelines regarding minimising transmission and because of that, we remain limited in what we can offer. Many parents will have felt it somewhat unfair that Government prioritised children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. We understand, but currently are being advised by authorities to adhere to this.

### How this sits alongside Home Learning?



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We will be utilising all our teaching team and all staff members to enable this change to happen. We are continuing Home Learning – via Tapestry and Google Classroom – for all children, so that the remainder of the week retains its structure.

I know you appreciate the challenges we have faced during this unprecedented time, and thank you for your ongoing support as we all work through this together. Please be assured, we are doing everything in our power to bring all our children back before the summer holidays to put them in the best place possible for – hopefully – a somewhat normal start to the new academic year.

We hope these final weeks of this academic year – one unlike we have ever experienced before – will serve to restore some measure of routine and 'normality' for the children and give them a more positive view of the future. If anything, we hope this time has made us stronger as a community. Let us remember our school motto 'Conemur' – may we strive together.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Abrahams  
Headteacher