



Mill Water School

admin@millwater.devon.sch.uk | www.millwater.devon.sch.uk | 01395 568890

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts, worries and concerns this week, as we have continued to consider how best to “*work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for*”.

We are waiting for confirmation from local and national authorities that certain tests and conditions are met. Our plan follows government guidelines for wider opening but we are still awaiting specific guidance for the safe opening of special schools and EYFS settings.

As expected, some of you are very clear that your child will not be returning before September, and some have been open to either sending them back for one day a week, or joining in with our outreach programme of taking children out for local walks.

As directed by the DFE, we have been conducting extensive risk assessments which will inform how many children we can accommodate in school and how many we can take out for walks. We also now have a clearer view of staff availability, which is obviously key to putting a plan together which meets everyone's needs, albeit in a very different way.

This is an update on our plans so far:

- Next week is half term and school will be closed to all.
- The following week, commencing 1st June, we will operate as we have been up to this point, with a limited number of vulnerable children in school.
- **From 8th June**, school will be open for a slowly increasing number of children. Some children will be taken out for walks in the community. **Before we can confirm this date, we have to undertake essential staff training, make changes to the school site, have the right resources, and check that what we are doing is safe and in line with the government guidance we are still waiting for.**

From 8th June, the school will be open for pupils four days a week, Tuesday – Friday, and we will operate with staggered start and finish times. All children will leave the building by 2.30 pm as we then have to start cleaning all the classroom resources and surfaces that will have been touched throughout the day. This additional cleaning requirement cannot be carried out by Devon Norse, our cleaning contractors, as they will have their work cut out cleaning the shared areas.

On Mondays, staff will continue to prepare individualised resources for both children in school and those at home.

I also need to make it clear to you that whilst we will do everything we can to ensure that the school is as clean as it can be, following the guidelines, we cannot eliminate all risk. We cannot guarantee that all children will be able to follow social distancing – in fact, we know that our children can't manage this. We will therefore be keeping children in their own small class groups throughout the day, separated from other members of the school community. We will supervise all the children in stringent handwashing and respiratory hygiene throughout the day, but will still not be able to eliminate all risk. We can only manage it to the best of our ability. You can only send your child back to school on this understanding.

I know that availability, or rather non-availability, of school transport has been an issue for some of you. We can all appreciate that DCC transport is being stretched to the absolute limits as they seek to implement social distancing in all their vehicles. If you have been asked to bring your children to school in your own vehicle, we will let you know what time you should arrive in the morning, and collect in the afternoon, as we have to maintain social distancing and avoid congestion in the car park. We would ask you to wait in your car for your child to be collected by a member of staff. And to wait in your car in the afternoon for your child to be brought out to you.

The health, safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff remains paramount, and so we need to insist that you continue to comply with Government guidance in relation to social distancing, including during half-term. This advice can be obtained from <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. We will be asking that children bring the absolute minimum into school with them as every item that they handle or mouth is an opportunity for virus transmission.

Our plans for each day may also have to change at short notice if we find that we are unable to maintain safe staffing ratios.

We will be in touch with each of you when our plans are clearer and we have a better idea of which children will be attending on each day, and when walks out in the community will be scheduled.

In the meantime, please enjoy the warm weather next week and thank you for all your well wishes in these challenging times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Sarah Pickering