

22.05.20 – Wider Re-opening – a Guide for Parents

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you will know, plans are underway for schools to open more widely. Schools have been asked to consider opening more widely on or after 1st June but not before. The exact date of each school's re-opening will be determined on a school basis and after all risk assessment and practical considerations have been put in place.

Dorin Park has been planning for wider re-opening on 1st June – risk assessments are complete and staff have been trained in the way of working which will be needed to keep everyone on site as safe as possible. This guide will outline what we have planned for the children, what the timelines are and what barriers may stop us from opening on 1st June.

At this time, over a third of our parents have indicated they would like their child to return on 1st June. Some parents remain uncertain and others would like them to return later. The majority of parents have indicated they do not wish their children to return this academic year. It is important that you know we see this as a decision for parents and unless the child is unsafe at home or would be unsafe in school, we would support the parent's choice as the first and foremost consideration.

I've asked for my child to come back. What happens now?

You should receive notification by the end of Friday 22nd that we have processed the application and allocated certain days for your child to return. We have notified Transport of this and they are now attempting to allocate transport for the 1st June. If your child has a clinical vulnerability we will also notify you that we are seeking medical advice to ensure your child is not at risk of complications should they develop Covid19. Until we confirm to you that we have clinical guidance that they will not, your child will not be able to return to school. We have already begun the discussion process for how this will be achieved through the LA and will advise you as soon as that is decided. This is part of a risk assessment procedure from the DfE and we must comply.

Every child will have an individual risk assessment around their needs to ensure we have put things in place in school to reflect their needs during this period of very different working. This is around protecting them as far as possible from catching Covid19 or passing it to others. Staff have been working on these this week.

On Friday 29th May, you will receive another notification that we are able to open and whether your child will be able to attend. This will explain if we have had Transport and Health confirmation (where relevant).



INVESTORS IN PUPILS

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What could stop Dorin Park from opening as planned on 1st June?

We have prepared in school as fully as possible. DfE documentation for special schools arrived considerably later than for mainstream primaries and guidance has been incomplete and added to daily. Despite this, we have completed an extensive risk assessment process and staff training and site preparation. Transport has been booked and the LA are doing their best to ensure that they get transport to you. We have engaged with Health colleagues to attempt to get a system for collection of medical confirmation around clinical vulnerability according to very recently published DfE guidance. We have made our site as safe as possible and been in constant dialogue with the LA.

But there are still some factors which could prevent us opening as planned and these are outside our control:

1. We are told the DfE decision about whether it is safe for any school to open more widely will not be made until 28th May. Usually this is released at a media briefing in the evening, and we do not have advance information of this. Details from these briefings often take days to be released formally to schools, with extensive attached paperwork.
2. Transport may not be able to make the substantial changes needed in time, despite their best efforts. However if you are able to bring and collect your child in this instance, we will be open for them.
3. For certain children, we may not have received the confirmation we need around clinical vulnerability and therefore those children will not be able to attend until we do receive that.
4. Various unions are at present lobbying for re-opening not to happen on 1st June. If they instruct their members not to co-operate with wider re-opening, we may have to close that provision. At the present time, there are a number of conditions around school re-opening that the unions have asked for at national level on Health and Safety grounds and these have not been met.
5. The R-value may rise and, if we deem it is unsafe, in conjunction with the LA and Governing Board, we will not re-open to all. This may also apply if there is very conflicting scientific advice.

We realise how incredibly frustrating it is to have this level of uncertainty and we find it difficult too. Please bear with us if these things do happen because they are not in our control.

I don't want my child to come back yet. What happens now?

If we did not feel able to support your decision, we would already have contacted you about that. If you have not been contacted directly then we understand your decision and will continue to provide the online learning and welfare calls for as long as necessary. Please note you may find the timing of the online learning being uploaded changes as all teaching staff will be working in school from 1st June and teaching children on different days.

We will check with all parents again whether they want their children to return on a fortnightly basis, so if you said no at this point but might like to send them later, you will be contacted again. Many of our parents have decided they don't want them to come back this term and please don't feel pressured by these checks – it's to ensure people are regularly given choices. This is an individual decision for each family.

I'm sending my child back. How will it be different so I can prepare them?

The children will be taught in their normal classes and tutor rooms with the exception of a couple of our oldest students who are well able to manage a different class base. They will have their usual staff with them. There may be a few staff who they don't see who are working from home as they are in the clinically vulnerable category. These staff are assisting with the online learning packages.

However, it will be very different. Pupils will not be able to leave their classrooms and they will only see the class team and the children in that reduced group. This is what we call a 'pod'. The pod is our best means for reducing the risk of infection transmission. It is the alternative to social distancing which the DfE has suggested. Our children are not able to socially distance and this increases their risk of becoming infected. Children in this school are very rarely able to fully comply with the extensive hygiene regulations now needed, and again the pod will

provide some level of protection against coming into contact with lots of people. Please be aware, the pod reduces the risk but it does not remove it. While we are making very many adaptations to our practice, we cannot guarantee at any time that they will not come into contact with someone carrying the infection as it can be asymptomatic. For this reason, these adaptations will be adhered to very strictly.

Pupils will arrive in school on taxis that have been arranged in pod groups or are single occupancy. Parents transporting children will find pick up and drop off is one vehicle at a time to each entrance. Until that entrance has been cleared, everyone needs to remain in their vehicles. This will be directed by staff on the car park. We expect that it will take longer to get children in and out of the building, especially in the first week. No parent or transport operative will be allowed into the building. We do not have any visitors inside the building when the children are in.

Children will be in small groups of no more than 5 and usually smaller in their class base. They will remain in this base all day except for going outside wherever possible to their designated play areas. Rooms have been set up to keep children distanced to some degree but we recognise our children will not be able to comply with this or in many cases understand the concept at all. We will do our best to get them to understand as much as they can. They will be able to play out but not on the large playground equipment. They will be able to use bikes etc., which will be disinfected. Children within a pod will not be able to share toys and equipment. They should not bring equipment and toys in from home. This will be most difficult for our youngest children but we must put their safety first. Many of the toys and equipment they are used to have been put away as they cannot be disinfected in the required way. Soft furnishings have been removed. We will not be able to mark children's work at the moment as evidence currently suggests that different people handling books is not safe. Older children doing exam work will be able to use some IT equipment but it will be single user as keyboards etc. are very difficult to disinfect between users. Classroom surfaces and equipment will be cleaned regularly through the day and fully cleaned before occupancy next day.

Many classrooms have their own toilets and children will use these so they do not have to leave the pod. Some older students will leave to use toilets but they will be accompanied by a member of staff to ensure that hygiene practices are followed and to ensure they don't come into contact with others. Children who need assistance with toileting will have this provided by class staff in most cases. The continence team will be on site and will be using PPE in supporting those pupils who need most help. They will move between a very limited number of pods but with disposable PPE to prevent transmission.

Lunch will be in the classrooms and will be brought to the class door. Staff preparing and delivering lunches will not enter the pods. We have made a decision that we will have to provide packed lunches rather than hot meals due to the issues around food hygiene in schools.

PE lessons and Forest School will take place in an amended form as these are outdoors and staff can remain at a distance, therefore pod security will not be breached. Outdoor activities pose less risk when managed. It is important that the children get fresh air and exercise.

The DfE has been very clear that school staff do not need PPE. The decisions around PPE for personal care staff has been less clear. Our continence staff have PPE. All staff who have requested it have been trained in how to use it. We do not provide staff with face coverings but they are allowed to use their own. Again, we have discussed safe use of face coverings with them. Children are not required to use face coverings and in some cases it would be dangerous for the child. If you want your child to use a face covering please let us know, but the child must be able to use it safely without assistance as we would not be permitted to support them at this time.

To keep everyone safe, we will be operating 2 metre social distancing as far as possible and reduced physical contact with the children. We are very aware that small children especially find this incomprehensible. It does not mean that we will not comfort your child if they fall and hurt themselves, but we will generally amend what we do to reduce contact. This means on hot sunny days you will need to apply 24-hour sun cream before they

come to school, or dress them in cool clothing but with long sleeves and covered legs and a sun hat. It would increase the risk to your child if we applied sun cream so we will not do this at the present time. Please send in a full water bottle with your child. You are welcome to send in more than one but, to prevent cross-contamination, we will not refill them. I understand that some of these things are very different to normal but they are part of our risk assessments around saliva, urine and faeces.

Why does my child need an individual risk assessment (RA)?

Our children have such very differing needs. The RA is to make sure that we've considered all of their needs and minimised any threat to them or to others in terms of infection risk. Things we will look at include: whether they are able to stay safely in a pod, either on their own or with others, as we have to keep children in pods if they come back; whether they have increased risk of transmitting through saliva; whether they are able to follow any distancing protocols.

We have had feedback from some parents that their child is not independently mobile and therefore at lower risk if they can't understand social distancing. I'm afraid this is not the case. Other children in the class will be mobile and will not understand that they cannot make contact. We will not restrain children to prevent them touching other children and are unlikely to be able to distract them enough to stop them. This is one of the risks with children with complex needs returning and I want to be honest with you about it. The pod minimises how many children and adult could become infected but it will not stop children becoming infected if people in the pod carry the infection.

What will happen if someone in the pod gets coronavirus?

Testing is now available for all children and staff members. If you suspect your child has symptoms please contact us urgently so we can help you get testing organised. We are aware that some of our children will not cooperate with being tested. If anyone in the pod tests positive, everyone in the pod (staff and pupils) will need to self-isolate at home for 14 days and will be able to get tested. If you are not able to do this, you should not send your child back to school as it is a key condition of keeping others safe.

My child is due to come in but is unwell. What do I do?

Children are thought more likely to be asymptomatic than adults. If your child shows any signs of being unwell, please do not send them to school. If they present at school being unwell in any way or become unwell during the day, we will send them home immediately and you will have to collect them. If you are not able to do this, your child should not return to school.

The symptoms of coronavirus are very varied, especially at the start and in mild cases, so it is important to take any sign of illness seriously and protect others by not sending an unwell child in. This is a time to be extra cautious over whether they are ill and not risk transmitting possible infection to others.