



14th July 2020

Dear parents/carers,

As I am sure you already know, from September, the expectation is that all children return to school full-time and their attendance will be compulsory. We have to balance this return with working safely within the guidelines on post-COVID-19 recovery. The full guidance (published 2nd July 2020) can be found on our website. As a result, we will be introducing some changes to our school day and to certain operational aspects of school life from September. These changes are being considered temporary, but the timescales for how long certain measures need to be in place are as yet unknown. It is another case of watch this space.

This is quite a lengthy letter as it includes a lot of information. You may wish to make a cuppa first, but *please do take the time to read it; it is important*. If you have any questions that you feel haven't been answered or require any clarity, please email into school: info@thorns-p.dudley.sch.uk

What will September look like for the children?

We will do our best to welcome children back into a school that is as normal and familiar as possible, and are expecting that the children will largely return to us happy to be back and ready to go (although we are aware that for many, they won't have attended school since 20th March, and it therefore may be a bit strange for them).

- Wednesday 2nd September: **Return to school for all children (start/finish times will vary – see below)**
- **Children will remain in their current classes for the whole of September** (we decided against half a term as eight weeks may be too long). They will keep their current teacher/s and follow their current curriculum (picking up new learning where they left off in March). NB Induction sessions for our new Reception intake will start to take place from early September alongside our existing Reception being in school (the new Otters will be in in small groups of six). Mrs Homer and Mr Perks will both be working additional days during this crossover period so that they 'double up' and Mrs Homer can concentrate on continuing to work with Owls, while Mr Perks focuses on the new children. In Year 5, Mrs Rees, Mrs Whyatt and Miss Beardmore - whose current class will have gone - will mainly be working with Miss Morgan and Mrs Baker to get the children 'Year 6 ready'.
- Wednesday 16th September: **Sports' Day** (events will take place within bubbles only. Other classes will be allowed to spectate from a safe distance. **No parents can attend this year.**
- Friday 18th September: **Year 5 children's last day in Y5**. They will start in Year 6 on Monday 21st September.
- Tuesday 29th September: **Children's last day in their current class**. **School reports** showing your children's attainment in relation to age-related expectations and their attitude/effort will be issued (via email)
- Wednesday 30th September: **School closed to all children**. INSET day for staff to prepare for their new classes (and move classrooms if necessary)
- Thursday 1st October: **Children 'move up' to their new classes** and teachers

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- A carefully planned 'Recovery Curriculum' is in place. Teachers have looked at the learning that their classes have missed over the last 14 or so weeks and identified the gaps. Supported by senior staff and the Curriculum Lead, from this the most 'essential' learning has been identified (i.e. the key knowledge and skills that the children need in order to move on successfully to the next year group and beyond). It is this essential learning that will form the basis of the children's time in September, and the children's days may feel a little more maths- and English-heavy for a while. There may be subjects they do very little of, and others where they do a block of learning (e.g. science, history). We will return to 'normal' curriculum delivery as soon as possible, and no later than the summer term 2021 (which is the government deadline).
- In September, we will be looking to recruit a team of committed volunteers to hear readers etc. Please let the school office know if you are interested.

How will School ensure that my child is kept safe?

We will endeavour to make our school as safe an environment for the children, staff and parents as possible. A number of current measures will remain in place and there will be adaptations to the school environment and school day. As guidance is changed and updated, this could mean that amendments are made. This situation will be ongoing and we will keep you updated accordingly.

- Children will still be asked to wash their hands thoroughly with soap, for 20 seconds upon arrival in school. We are currently well-stocked with supplies.
- Hand-washing will be carried out regularly throughout the day, and always before/after breaks and before/after eating.
- Tissues will be available in classrooms and the children will be expected to 'catch it, bin it, kill it' if they cough or sneeze (there are special lidded bins for disposal).
- All children in key stages one and two will be sat at front-facing desks.
- 2m social distancing is no longer an expectation but classrooms will still have some social distancing demarcations, mainly showing an exclusion zone around the door for visitors to the classroom – such as myself – to maintain a 2m distance. Time spent with 1m of another person will be minimised as much as possible. Group activities and 'carpet time' for younger ones will be less than normal.
- Children will be reminded regularly of the safety practices in school and deliberately ignoring these rules will be addressed through our Behaviour Policy. Children will be reminded not to touch each other and to respect others' personal space.
- Classes will function as 'bubbles' and interactions between bubbles will be kept to a minimum (but cannot be prevented completely, e.g. sharing shared toilets). There will be no assemblies or multiple-class 'gatherings' or events such as school discos until further notice. Breaks and lunchtimes will be staggered to minimise classes mixing, and playground equipment and other shared resources will be wiped down regularly and always between be passed from one class to another.
- Staff will wipe surfaces down regularly and they will be kept as clear as possible to make this easier (although classrooms will not be as sparse as they have been because we need resources to deliver the curriculum, which is allowed).

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- Shared resources, such as maths apparatus that may be used by multiple 'bubbles', will be thoroughly cleaned after each class. Resources that belong within a class will be cleaned regularly (but not necessarily after each use). Where possible, children will have their own equipment to use to minimise sharing. Children will not be allowed to bring pencil cases or other stationery into school.
- Use of soft toys and furnishings, including cushions and blankets, will be restricted to occasions where it is directly beneficial to the children's learning (e.g. puppets for a story); we have fabric sprays available in school to ensure these are kept clean.
- To minimise children's mixing, extra-curricular after-school clubs will not be running until further notice.
- We will operate a one-way system for parents dropping off and picking up and arrival and pick-up times will be temporarily adjusted to avoid too many people arriving or leaving at the same time (see below).
- Staff will use alcohol gel upon arrival at school and will maintain a safe distance between themselves as much as practically feasible. Whole-staff meetings will be kept to a minimum and use of online alternatives such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom will continue to be used where possible.
- Visitors to school will be kept to a minimum and procedures for their admittance remain in place. Should you need to speak to a member of staff, we suggest a phone call rather than a visit. If you do visit the school office, please follow the health and safety instructions displayed. You will see that there are floor markers, a Perspex screen and alcohol hand gel for your use.
- Our corridors are narrow, which we cannot do anything about. However, we have taped off a central divider and put arrow indicators to ensure people keep left.

Daily Procedures

Daily drop-off, break, lunchtimes and collection times will be staggered to reduce the number of children, parents and staff in any one place at the same time. At the moment, we do not know how long these times will remain in place. We recognise that this might be difficult for some of you but it is unavoidable. Please bear with us and we will return to normal as soon as we are able.

Current class:	EYFS and Key Stage 1			Key Stage 2			
	Reception Owls	Year 1 Badgers	Year 2 Foxes	Year 3 Hedgehogs	Year 4 Kingfishers	Year 5 Squirrels	Year 6 Otters
Arrival (please be on time)	<u>8.30am</u>	<u>8.30am</u>	<u>8.30am</u>	<u>8.45am</u>	<u>8.45am</u>	<u>8.45am</u>	
Break time	N/A (free-flow outdoor access)	10.00am KS1 playground	10.15am KS1 playground	10.15am KS2 playground	10.30am KS2 playground	10.45am KS2 playground	
Lunch Break starts	11.45am	12.00pm	12.00pm	12.15pm	12.15pm	12.30pm	

Hall slot	12.00pm	12.15pm	12.15pm	12.30pm	12.30pm	12.45pm	
Lunch ends	12.45m	1.00pm	1.00pm	1.15pm	1.15pm	1.30pm	
Home time (please be on time)	<u>3.00pm</u>	<u>3.00pm</u>	<u>3.00pm</u>	<u>3.15pm</u>	<u>3.15pm</u>	<u>3.15pm</u>	

****Year group is the year/class they are CURRENTLY IN (July 2020)****

- **Children need to be brought into school via the usual access gate.**
- **Reception and Key Stage 1 children can be taken to their classroom doors at 8.30am** before you leave via the gate to the right of Year 1's classroom (this will be signposted). In this way, we can keep our pedestrian 'traffic' moving and prevent parents from crossing over in the gateway.
- **Key Stage 2 children need to be brought in via the usual gate at 8.45am** but parents need to let their children walk around to their classroom doors by themselves. You will not be allowed to pass through the narrow space where the new Reception outdoor area extends. Staff will be there to greet children and see them safely round to key stage 2's doors.
- Similarly, **when collecting your child (3.00pm for Reception and KS1; 3.15pm KS2), please enter via the normal gate and leave via the gate by Y1.** KS2 parents please wait on the KS1 playground for your children to come to you.
- As the new exit will require you to use the steps, parents with mobility difficulties or bringing pushchairs can send their children in through the gates, where a member of staff will be on hand. The pupils' gate from Thorns Road will be manned by a member of staff to ensure children do not go back out onto the road. The staff member will also be preventing parents from exiting via that gate.
- Parents with children in both key stages are welcome to wait on the playground before exiting, using the signposted way out, but we request that you observe social distancing and **do not stand in groups.**
- **Only one parent should drop off and pick up.**
- **Please do not arrive too early at either end of the day or stand around outside school forming a crowd.**

As a parent, what do I need to do?

- Drop off and collect your children at the appropriate time each day (**EYFS/KS1 8.30am – 3.00pm; KS2 8.45am – 3.15pm**). please do not be late.
- Follow the directions and **stick to the one-way system** in place
- Send your child with a **water bottle**, ensuring it is cleaned and refilled each day.
- Talk to your child before their return about the importance of following the rules and staying safe, but reassure them that School is still a safe and happy environment.



- Continue to support your child with **home learning** – you may find that they have more homework than you are used to. If this is the case it is because we feel it is necessary and will be helpful. Please ensure your child completes any tasks they are given.
- Ensure that your child only brings into school essential items (pencil cases are not allowed but lunch boxes and book bags are).
- Send your child into school in **full school uniform**, including appropriate footwear, as described in the Uniform Policy. Year 5 (going into 6) can start wearing their ties straight away.
- Please no watches, to aid safe hand washing (other jewellery should not be worn anyway).
- You will be notified of PE days will be notified in the autumn term and given instructions relating to kit. Please note that they will need an outdoor PE kit (see Uniform Policy).

What will happen from 1st October?

- *Thursday 1st October: Children move to their new classrooms and teacher/s. They will enter and exit the building via their new classroom's door.*
- *Classes will be taught by the following teachers/TAs:*

Reception (Otters)	Teachers:	Mrs Homer (M,T,W); Mr Perks (W, Th, F)
	Teaching Assistant:	Miss Norton
Year 1 (Owls)	Teacher:	Miss Kirton
	Teaching Assistant:	Mrs Holmes
Year 2 (Badgers)	Teacher:	Mrs Bennett
	Teaching Assistant:	Mrs Molloy
Year 3 (Foxes)	Teacher:	Miss Morgan
	Teaching Assistant:	Mrs Bicker
Year 4 (Hedgehogs)	Teacher:	Mrs Parkes
	Teaching Assistant:	Mrs Baker
Year 5 (Kingfishers)	Teacher:	Miss Kaur
	Teaching Assistant:	TBC/Mrs Westwood*
Year 6 (Squirrels)	Teacher:	Mrs Rees (M,T,W); Mrs Whyatt (W, Th, F)
	Teaching Assistant:	Miss Beardsmore

*Mrs Westwood will be taking on the role of Family Support Worker following Miss Holton's departure to take up a post elsewhere. She will still spend some time in class, working alongside a new TA, whom we have yet to appoint.

Mrs Raithby will continue to work across school, covering teachers' PPA time and senior staff's leadership & management time out of class.

- *An amended curriculum, bespoke to the needs of the class, will remain in place, again aimed to address the main gaps in learning and focus on priorities.*



I appreciate that there is a lot for you to take in here. The appendices that follow contain further information which I hope will bring clarity and reassurance to you at this time.

We are also working on a plan for home learning in the event of a local lockdown or further national lockdown, which would see children having to learn at home once more. Should we find ourselves in this position again, we would be looking to do more by way of live or online lessons, and we will be exploring the use of Google Classroom to have 'waiting in the wings', just in case.

I remain concerned, as I am sure you do, that we handle this situation in a way that does not adversely affect the children's mental health and well-being, and above all we want to see them back in school with smiles on their faces – only then are they ready to learn. If the children who have attended throughout this time are anything to go by then we won't have a problem – they have all been fantastic; we are immensely proud of them, as I am sure their families are.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your positivity and support at what has been a challenging time for everyone. The supportive emails, cards and comments have meant a lot. Thank you. I would also like to say a huge thank you to my wonderful staff – they really have been amazing throughout the last few months and have worked tirelessly to do their best for the children, both those in school and those at home. This crazy time really has brought the Thorns community together.

Wishing you all an enjoyable summer holiday – and looking forward to seeing you all in September.

R.L. Jordan

Rebecca Jordan
Head Teacher



APPENDICES

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection

- Procedures for dealing with any concerns relating to child protection or safeguarding will remain as normal, and our usual policies are in place. We are aware that for some children, lockdown won't have been a positive experience and that potentially it will have been traumatic for them. Staff are well trained in responding to any issues relating to this.
- We have added an appendix to our Child Protection Policy to take account of COVID-19-related matters and to reflect how we will protect our children at this time.

2. Emergency Evacuation and Lockdown Procedures

- COVID-19 appendices were added to these policies in June 2020.
- In the event of a fire or lockdown alarm, we will endeavour maintain some social distancing and not mix classes IF the risks of doing so are not outweighed by the imminent risk of fire, an on-site intruder etc. We will exercise common sense should an alarm occur, and hope that parents would trust our judgement in so doing.
- During the first few weeks of wider term, we will carry out a fire evacuation drill.

3. Medical and First Aid

Please familiarise yourself with the guidance relating to the most recent information on testing, the NHS Track and Trace process and what to do if you believe you, or someone in your household, has COVID-19. The following documents can be found on our website:

www.gov.uk/guidance/contacts-phe-health-protection-teams

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance

- Usual policies for medication remain in place. Please make sure inhalers and Epi-pens are in school and that they are in date. New forms need to be completed.
- First Aid procedures will be followed as usual, but in the event that a child requires treatment of some kind, the first aider will wear PPE. All of our TAs are first aid trained, and everyone has received online training in correct application, use and disposal of PPE.
- First aid will be administered in the First Aid Room or outside on the playground. If an adult becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms whilst in school, they will be sent home immediately and will attend for a test (another adult – either from within school or a supply agency – will cover their duties).
- If a child in school becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, their parent will be called immediately to come and collect them. In the meantime, an adult will put on their PPE, take them to sit outside to wait for a parent. In the event of inclement weather, the child will wait with the adult in the non-fiction library area/corridor in KS2, ensuring that the door is open for ventilation. The child's parent is expected to take their child to be tested (book online or call NHS on 119). We request that the results are shared with school and in the

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event of a positive result, we will contact our local health protection team for the latest advice.

4. *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

- We are well-stocked with PPE for staff to use in the event that they need it. We have face masks, gloves and aprons, as well hand wash, alcohol gel and approved surface cleaners. Staff have all seen an online tutorial about the correct use of PPE, including how to put on, remove and dispose of a face mask.
- Tissues will be provided in every classroom, and after use, these will be disposed of in the new lidded bins in each bubble's room.

5. *Behaviour*

- A COVID-19 appendix has been added to our Behaviour Policy. The full policy is on our website. It acknowledges that children may struggle to cope with returning to school, after such a lengthy period of uncertainty and for some alack of structure and routine.
- Children will be made aware of the importance of them following our additional rules in order to keep everyone safe; they will know that there are consequences for deliberately breaking these.
- As a school, we will continue to have high expectations of children as they return, and whilst we accept that School may be daunting and unsettling - and allowances for that will be made – the usual rules around behaviour will apply: be SAFE; be KIND; be GREAT, and display the behaviours associated with great-ness:
 - **Good presentation – Work and self**
 - **Respectful - People and property**
 - **Embrace challenge - Have a go; take a risk**
 - **Aim high - Aspire and achieve**
 - **Try your best - Use your 'learning powers'**
- Rewards, such as stickers and stampers, will still be used as appropriate and we will be re-launching our house teams and house points ready for 1st October.
- 'Choc Stars' in its normal form cannot happen; instead 'over and above' behaviour will be recognised by a 'Takeaway Choc Star' to enjoy at home.
- Consequences for not following our rules will still be applied, such as being spoken to by another member of staff or being referred to a senior member of staff. For full details, please see the Behaviour Policy Covid-19 Appendix on our website.