

Archibald First School
Archibald Street
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 1EB

Headteacher **Mrs R Turner**

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your responses to the online questionnaires.

For the children returning to school, questionnaire 1, we had 275 out of 344 replies. The final percentages stood at 60% happy for children to return to school with 40% preferring to keep children at home.

The majority of your comments were around ensuring the safety of the children and staff which reflects the thinking of ourselves. Your comments and views have gone into our risk assessments and planning.

We understand and respect all of the individual decisions of our families.

The second questionnaire asked which year group you felt most strongly about being able to return to school, IF this was a possibility.

I appreciate that some expressed this was not the decision of parents to make, however, I felt it was important to understand your viewpoints and listen to you. I also asked the staff at school to complete this survey. This information will also be considered in the decision making process.

The government are due to announce the critical medical and scientific data on May 28th which will set out if schools may be in a position to open at a date after June 1st. Before and after that date, we are determined to work in a cautious and phased way responding to national and local changes and, above all, we want to ensure that when we make decisions they are sustainable and we do not need to make sudden changes that affect our children and families.

As I have already shared, the government have set out guidelines for schools to follow in widening access to school over the second half of the summer term. Some of the key elements of this guidance are:

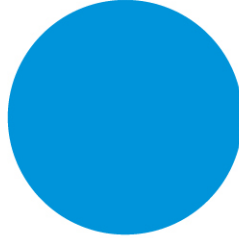
- Children must be kept in 'bubbles' of no more than 15: *In our classrooms this is restricted to a maximum of 10 due to the sizes of the room*
- Social distancing rules are to apply where possible throughout the setting e.g. a small number of desks set out in a classroom
- The same teacher/member of staff must remain with the bubble
- Interactions between children in different bubbles are not allowed

Alongside these are a range of rigorous instructions to prevent virus spread including about cleaning, limiting resources in classrooms, entry to school, interactions with parents and hygiene.

There is a lot for us to do to be ready and we are working hard in every part of school. Leaders, staff and governors are meeting to plan routines, train staff, inform parents about new systems, rearrange our classrooms and building and risk assess every aspect of how school life will operate.

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Our risk assessments and plans must then be shared with staff, governors, Trade Unions and HR for approval. As I am sure you appreciate creating small bubbles in separate classrooms of 8-10 children has huge implications on staffing and on space in school. For example; at least 2-3 members of staff will be needed to be with each group (depending on the age and needs of the children) and they cannot work with another group.

Parents will also understand that as in any organisation, and as with a number of our children and parents, there are members of staff who will be in vulnerable groups who will not be able to be in school at the moment.

Our greatest concern is that, within these new guidelines, when children come into school *we can offer a setting that is not only safe, but that is welcoming and provides them a happy, secure and purposeful environment.* At the same time, we need to be able to support the vast majority of our children who will still be working from home.

Having identified, as a staff team, the children with allocated places to date, the available space and staffing numbers; the next part of the planning process is to gather information about the needs of our families. At this point I must emphasise that places in school are **extremely limited** due to the above restrictions and all responses will be given equal and careful consideration. This will present challenges for many families as we each strive to balance home, work and family life. This includes many of us on the school staff who are in the same position as you; please know that we do fully understand the frustration and difficulties that the current situation presents to you.

If you wish to be considered for a potential space at school, please answer the 3rd questionnaire by Wednesday 27th May at 10.00 am <https://forms.gle/PbG6WPV3DzCXtE28A>

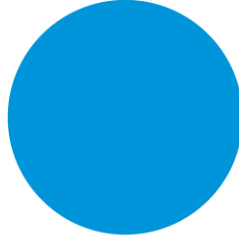
I hope you feel that we have worked hard to keep you as informed as possible about the potential plans and next steps. Please see the attached sheet detailing our plans for a 'Phased Approach' should be we given the go ahead on 28th May. Further communication will follow this during the week of 2nd June as appropriate.

Best Wishes

Rebecca Turner
Head Teacher

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Our Plan of Approach

Our plan as it stands, based on our risk assessments and staffing to date is:

Phase 1: From June 2nd Critical Workers and Key Children

Throughout the lockdown period, school has been open for critical workers and key children. During the week from June 2nd we will be working to establish new learning bubbles and routines for these children who will not be able to mix with children in other bubbles.

These families have been contacted and will receive information regarding the bubbles and start/finish times for school over the next week.

Families will hopefully be contacted this week regarding places going forward: subject to the government announcement and the progress of our planning and risk assessments at school.

Phase 2: From June 8th at the earliest

When we have established the critical worker groups and ensured the school is ready, we will be able to offer places to identified children and then children from one more year group.

I will give detailed information to those families as soon as I am able.

Phase 3 – 4: June - July

Throughout this period, we will be responding to national and local scientific advice, assessing practicalities of staffing and space and looking to bring more groups into school.

Year 4:

We know many of our Year 4 parents and children feel it is important to have some contact in school before the transition to middle school. Although the government did not name this year group in their plans, we aim as a school to work with parents and try to ensure we have some time with our oldest children before they leave us. How this will look will be determined by some of the considerations outlined above.

Home Learning: Within our planning process we are working hard to ensure home learning continues and, where possible, we will consider approaches to improve what we offer our children.

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