

Maiden Beech Academy

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Thursday 14th May 2020

Dear Parents,

IMPORTANT: Partial Reopening of Maiden Beech Academy

As promised, I am writing to update you on the current situation and to share our initial thoughts on the partial reopening of the school in the light of the Prime Minister's announcement last Sunday and subsequent guidance received.

I would like to reassure you that the safety of our children and staff remains our utmost priority and this will be the guiding factor underpinning any plans we make and implement. A thorough risk assessment will be conducted before more children and staff are permitted to return to school.

The Government has said that it may be possible for more children to attend school from the 1st June (at the earliest); however, school leaders are questioning whether this is feasible, and it is more likely therefore that Maiden Beech will admit children from **Monday 8th June** instead. The five key tests set by the Government will need to be met before more children can return to educational settings, and at present, these tests have not yet been fully met.

Whilst we are planning to reopen early June, this may be postponed nationally with a decision being made on 28th May.

I would recommend that you read the following guidance from the DfE relating to the reopening of schools and more detailed information is expected shortly to aid schools in their planning:

General guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

Specific guidance for parents and carers – please read

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

There has been much discussion over the last few days about which year group should return to school first in a middle school context. The DfE guidance states the following:

We expect all mainstream schools and colleges, including independent schools, to follow the same approach. We encourage middle schools to do the same and welcome back children in year 6, to ensure national parity for children in this year group.

Many middle school headteachers nationally feel that Year 8 should return as the priority, so we can support their transition to upper school; however, whilst we are waiting for definitive feedback from the Local Authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner, **it is very likely that Year 6 will be the first year group to return to school in June to ensure national parity for this year group.**



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Year 6 Parental Survey

In order to help us with our contingency planning, I would be very grateful if parents of Year 6 children could complete a very brief online survey, which can be accessed at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QBS7RGH>

This should take you less than a minute to complete and will provide us with important information to aid our thinking.

Year 8 transition

I would like to reassure Year 8 parents and pupils that I am in conversation with Mr Gardner, headteacher at Wadham School, and Mr Walker, headteacher at Swanmead, re: possible transition activities later this term prior to transfer in September. It is our intention to send you a joint letter next week with more details and to show that we are working collaboratively to ensure the best transition in the current context.

Draft plan and initial ideas about reopening Maiden Beech (subject to change and confirmation)

Understandably, you will have lots of questions and concerns regarding the reopening of schools; therefore, I thought it would be helpful to share our initial thoughts and ideas about how we think this can happen safely.

- **Year 6** are most likely to return to school first from Monday 8th June if the Government tests are fully met. However, to limit the numbers on site, **we will open partially for this year group operating a week in/week out timetable.**
 - Two tutor groups will attend school at any one time (potentially 50 – 60 children). These tutor groups will be split into 2 -3 teaching groups, limiting the number of children per class to just 8 or 9. Smaller numbers allow us to create a safer ‘bubble’ by allowing us to put appropriate protective measures in place.
- **The number of adults working with specific groups of children will be limited.** Children will be allocated a specific classroom and will not move around the school from lesson-to-lesson. They will spend the majority of time with one teacher.
- The **curriculum** will include a daily English and maths lesson (using work set as online learning), a chance for some form of physical activity, and one or two other subjects per day again based on online learning resources to prevent children not attending school falling further behind.
- **Children will not be expected to wear uniform** and will attend school in appropriate non-uniform and trainers. This will enable parents to wash clothes regularly.
- **School transport:** Buses will run on the usual routes; however, it would be preferable for children to walk to school or to be dropped off by parents to aid social distancing measures. – ***please complete survey to ascertain demand for school transport***
- **Catering/school meals:** We would prefer any children attending school to bring a packed lunch from home. Children eligible for free School meals (FSM) will continue to receive food vouchers to enable parents to purchase food for snacks and lunches. If possible we would like to reduce the amount of catering taking place on site – ***please complete survey to ascertain demand for school meals.***
- **Timings of the school day:** We are considering shortening the school day (9:00 AM – to 2:00 PM) to allow some flexibility in start and end times and to provide more time for cleaning the site. – ***please complete survey to indicate if you are happy with this proposal.***
- **The children of key workers and those children deemed vulnerable who are currently attending childcare provision will continue to do so irrespective of the year group they are in. We still offer 7:00 – 7:00 child care for the children of key workers.**

- In order to make the school environment as safe as possible for everyone, we will do the following:
 - Increase cleaning.
 - Tackle potential 'pinch points' such as dropping off and collecting children by staggering arrival and leaving times.
 - Utilising the field and playground safe to allow children to play whilst encouraging effective social distancing strategies
- Clinically extremely vulnerable children and staff, those shielded because of their health or the vulnerability of a family member, or those vulnerable because of a pre-existing health condition **will not be expected to attend school.**
- **Staff and children should not attend if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 or are self-isolating due to symptoms being exhibited by someone else in their household.**
- **Both staff and children will be eligible for testing** if they become ill with Coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their household. A negative test result will allow them back into school; a positive test result will ensure rapid action is taken to protect class mates and staff. Children and staff at risk of possible infection will remain at home until tests results are confirmed (usually within 48 hours).

Attendance

The Government are encouraging all eligible children to attend school. However, parents choosing not to send their son or daughter to school will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools will not be held accountable for attendance levels.

Apologies; this is a long letter with lots to think about and digest. However, it is important that we share with you our thoughts and ideas at this stage, and will continue to write to regularly with further updates once details emerge.

Take lots of care and stay safe



Carl Winch
Headteacher