



# Cringleford Home Learning

## Headteacher's daily blog

Date: Friday 15th May 2020

Dear all,

**Schools will need to be open and honest with parents about the challenges they will face in expanding the number of pupils attending. NAHT recommends that school leaders write to parents and carers as early as possible to explain these challenges and outline the steps the school will take to assess whether it is possible to increase the number of pupils attending, emphasising that the safety of pupils, staff and families will remain paramount throughout.**

The above statement is from my headteacher union. I apologise for the length of this message, but there has been so much to consider this week about schools re-opening and I wanted to give you a full picture from what I have read so far.

First of all, I want to summarise the key sections from the government guidelines sent out to all schools.

The government has stated that schools **may** be able, from the week commencing 1 June, to welcome back more children to school. The government will only do this 'provided the 5 key tests set by the government justify the changes at the time, including the rate of infection is decreasing and the enabling programmes set out in the roadmap are operating effectively.' As a result, schools are being asked 'to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that these tests are met.'

From the week commencing 1 June **at the earliest**, schools are being asked to welcome back children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, alongside priority groups (children of key workers and vulnerable pupils). By returning pupils gradually, schools can initially reduce the number of children in classrooms compared to usual and put protective measures in place to reduce risks.

The government wants to see children back in schools to support their learning, knowing that it is important for their mental well-being to have social interactions with their peers and teachers. The government's ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays 'for a month if feasible, though this will be kept under review.' Additional year groups would be welcomed back 'if the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus indicates it is appropriate to have larger numbers of children within schools.'

The government accepts that 'unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age **children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff.**' In deciding

to bring more children back into school the government is taking that into account. Schools are expected to work through a series of measures:

- Avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- Frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- Regular cleaning of settings
- Minimising contact and mixing

The guidelines state that 'It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, **only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups**. Schools are encouraged to keep children in those small groups 2 metres away from each other whenever possible. Although groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk.

Classes should be split in half, with no more than 15 pupils per small group and one teacher (and, if needed, a teaching assistant). Teaching assistants could also be allocated to lead a group, working under the direction of a teacher. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in other year groups should also be split into small groups of no more than 15 pupils. Where possible, children are expected to remain in the same small groups at all times each day and **different groups should also not mix during the day**. Wherever possible children would use the same classroom throughout the day with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day. Desks should be spaced out as far as possible.

Schools are expected to stagger break and lunch times and organise staggered drop-off and pick up times. Only one parent would be expected to accompany children to school and parents and children would be encouraged to walk or cycle to school where possible.

There is a lot of guidance about what would happen if a child or member of staff developed symptoms compatible with Coronavirus and if there was a situation in which someone subsequently tested positive, the rest of the class group (maximum 15 children) would be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days.

Shielded or clinically vulnerable children would not be expected to attend school and clinically vulnerable members of staff would work from home where possible.

The guidelines state that the wearing of a face covering or face mask in schools is not recommended as they may 'inadvertently increase the risk of transmission'.

The Department of Education and the government will not be punishing / fining any parents for not sending in pupils. Should you decide that you wish for your child to stay at home, that is absolutely fine and we would totally understand and respect that.

I feel it is important to try to give you a summary of what the government guidelines are as following them means that school life for the weeks leading up to the summer holidays would look very different in many ways and you would need to be aware of that.

From reading the above guidelines it is clear that the school would not be able to open up to all pupils who would be eligible to attend if everyone took up the offer. We would have 210 children

from Reception, Years 1 and 6 plus the children of key workers – all of whom would have to be in groups of no more than 15 at the most. We simply wouldn't have enough rooms or members of staff! For that reason alone, you can see that planning for after half term is incredibly complicated. **First of all, we really need to know how many pupils from Reception, Years 1 and 6 might be returning to school.** In the first instance we need to find out who, at this point in time, would have **no intention** of sending their child back to school until September. I realise that viewpoints might change due to seeing how things go on and by getting an impression of the national scene and by stating that you have no intention of sending your child back would not mean that you couldn't change your mind at a later date. However, for us at school it is crucial that we have some indication of numbers so we can try to consider staffing implications and possible starting dates for different year groups. We might well have to consider some sort of rota system with one class in a year group attending for one week followed by the other or the week being split between classes. There are lots of options being considered by different schools. For this reason I would like to urge you to **complete a short parent survey which will be sent out via email / text later today**. I am organising a planning meeting on Monday to then consider all options based on the results, so replies should be sent in by then please.

I know all of our staff will do their utmost to make the learning experience a nurturing and positive one, but did want you to know that school life will not look the same next half term. We would try to blend the online learning (for those who stay at home) with what takes place in school so that the children have a broadly similar experience, but you would have to know that your child might not be taught by their regular class teacher.

Please also be aware that teaching unions are still negotiating with the Department for Education and the government about many aspects of the proposed guidelines and the start date for re-opening the school to more pupils will only take place when I think we are fully confident that all measures are in place and clear for parents and staff. I will be sending out more information on a daily basis and probably sending out other questionnaires next week to be able to organise groupings / rotas / staffing.

Below are links which give some information about what life looks like in schools in Denmark. This seems relevant because our government appears to be following a similar model. Of course the Danish context is still different from that of this country with far fewer deaths due to Coronavirus than in the U.K. Their schools also often combine primary and secondary aged pupils which means (because their older children are not back at school) that they have far more classrooms and outdoor space available. Danish children also start children the year they turn 6, so you won't see Reception children in the video clip.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-52649919/coronavirus-inside-a-reopened-primary-school-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-52550470>

Finally, on a completely different note, I know that lots of families around the country are facing hardships due to the lockdown. Although families eligible for free school meals are receiving vouchers, there might be other families who need free food parcels. Mrs Barker knows of a scheme doing this and I hope all families feel they could confidentially request to be included in this delivery school by emailing the office ([office@cringleford.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@cringleford.norfolk.sch.uk)).

Wishing you all the best,

Mr Henery