



# Cringleford Home Learning

## Headteacher's daily blog

Date: Friday 22nd May 2020

Thank you for your patience in waiting for a full response from me about arrangements next half term to comply with the government's statement that schools **may** be able, from the week commencing 1 June, to welcome back more children. As you will be aware there is considerable national concern and debate about the precise timings of school re-openings, and many different implementation plans across schools. It is worth remembering that the government stated clearly that re-opening schools to more children should only happen '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.' There is still the possibility that there will be another change in guidance and this might not be issued until a few days before June 1<sup>st</sup>.

In our planning we have simply tried to create a gradual phased return over an extended timescale, to give reflection and review time for staff, and to support children through a no doubt challenging transition back into a very changed school environment. We initially asked parents of children in Reception, Years 1 and 6 about whether they were considering sending them back to school. We then asked parents of key workers and spent a great deal of time working out how many pupils could be safely accommodated in classrooms. The high number of requests from the priority groups (children of key workers and vulnerable pupils) means that many classroom bases would be used to teach these groups. We have spent time clearing classrooms in order to make sure that children would be working in groups of no more than 10 or 12 children. We do not feel this group size can be exceeded safely at least in the first instance in order to comply with the stringent guidelines schools have been given.

The next main decision was then to consider which year group should be brought back to school. For a number of reasons we have decided that this should be the Year 6 cohort. As well as needing to complete their primary school education and to begin to prepare for transition to Year 7, we also think that they are the year group best equipped, due to their age and maturity, to adapt to a very changed school environment and be able to manage all the strict new routines which need to be put in place. They are also more likely to cope with the fact that the children will not all be with their normal class teachers and will have to remain in a small group for the whole day in school.

Unfortunately, accommodating the priority groups and the Year 6 children means that there is not the staffing or space to accept Year 1 or Reception pupils at this time. The government has stated

that it would like all year groups to be able to return by the end of term, but I think this is highly unlikely. We will review the situation and let you know if Year 1 pupils might be able to return at any point. Much will depend on how the government views the success of schools re-opening and whether their guidance changes as a result. I know this decision is likely to cause some frustration and disappointment, but we are doing our very best in an extremely difficult situation.

Up until now we have not sent a survey to parents of children in Reception and Year 1 asking whether a parent / carer is a key worker and wishes for their child to return to school, simply because we had thought we might have been able to accommodate all the children in those year groups. Parents who feel they fit into this category should read the following updated guidelines carefully and will be sent a survey later today.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

School staff have been working hard to make sure that we are ready to receive back more key worker, vulnerable and Year 6 pupils. There is a large amount of paper work and routines to establish and share with staff, some of whom, for a number of reasons, have not been on our rotas for looking after the children of key workers (something we have been able to do since the start of the lockdown). We are working hard to ensure that we have done everything we can to mitigate risks and put in place all the measures outlined to us by the DfE to ensure that we can have a safe return to school life. It is simply not possible to be able to achieve all this by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Year 6 pupils will be able to re-start school on June 8<sup>th</sup> and further details will be sent out about groupings and routines.

Due to the much larger number of key worker and vulnerable children due to start after half term, we will have to completely change how we are currently organising the teaching of these children, with at least one grouping per year group. For this reason, children of key workers who have not yet been in school up until this point will be able to start school on Wednesday June 3<sup>rd</sup>, giving all staff the opportunity to have whole school training about new routines and plan ahead for all those children for whom home learning will continue.

We know you have done a great job supporting the children at home and we are constantly looking for ways to be able to create more of a sense of community. We feel that the gradual introduction of Microsoft Teams and the increased opportunities for sharing some learning between those working at home and those in school will help us to do that.

Key worker parents will be sent further details today asking about expected patterns of attendance so we can make sure we can arrange staffing accordingly. Parents of children who have been coming into school on a regular basis up until now will be asked today about attendance for Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> and Tuesday June 2<sup>nd</sup>. A lot more information will be sent out in due course to those returning to school on either Wednesday June 3<sup>rd</sup> or Monday June 8<sup>th</sup>. Staggered drop off and pick up times will be given out when we know exact numbers of pupils, but we are expecting the whole school to be closed on Friday afternoons for all pupils (1 p.m.) so the school can be more extensively cleaned and staff can spend time planning online learning. The aim is for home learning and the lessons in school to have a very similar feel.

The support that has been provided by our parents has been incredibly encouraging and I am really proud of our whole school community. I know the next phase of returning to 'normal' life after

lockdown will be incredibly challenging, and hopefully things will change for the better as the days and weeks go by. There will be further communication to different groups of parents over the next few days to make sure that everyone has the information they need for arrangements after half term. In the meantime, I really hope everyone enjoys the May Bank holiday.

Kind regards

Neil Henery