



Bishop Vaughan Catholic School

14 June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you will be aware, at Bishop Vaughan we have been preparing for some time for the re-opening of schools. I have been working closely with the senior leadership team, the site team, colleagues from other schools and with the Local Authority to ensure that, when we re-open, we do so with the most robust safety arrangements possible. The safety of your children – and by extension your own safety as members of the school community - is of paramount importance. Risk assessments, plans and operational guidance have been drafted with care, however, finalisation of these has not been possible until the publication of the Welsh Government's guidance for the re-opening of schools. As this was published on Wednesday 10th June, we are now working to finalise arrangements for the provision that we will be able to offer.

It is precisely because your child's safety is our top priority that, for the foreseeable future, their school experience is going to be very different from what it normally is and we will provide details to you over the coming days and weeks. The Education Minister has made clear that the absolute maximum number of pupils in school at any one time must not exceed one-third of the total on roll. It is, in fact, likely to be less than this during the four weeks from 29th June.

We will do everything we can to ensure social distancing takes place, as will be evident from the details communicated to you, however, we cannot offer any guarantees of this. It will be vital that all attending the school setting follow the requirements relating to social distancing, handwashing and other measures to mitigate against the risk of virus spread. As you will be aware, the risks associated with Covid-19 have not gone away. In order that all are familiar with the requirements for ensuring their own safety and that of others, induction information will be made available prior to attending and at the first session attended.

In order to facilitate social distancing, most pupils should expect to have the opportunity to attend school for approximately three days between Monday 29th June and the end of term. They will be placed in groups of no more than ten pupils and will be supported by one constant member of staff with additional support from a further staff member. This is intended to minimise the risk to you and your family by ensuring that there are the fewest interactions possible as your child reintegrates into school before the virus has yet been eliminated and after this lengthy period of closure. Movement around the school will be limited to only that which is necessary.

Please note that:

- No pupil should be attending school if they have a shielding letter from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales advising them to remain at home until 16th August.

- If a pupil is in one of the Public Health Wales 'vulnerable' categories, or is living with somebody who is shielding or who is in a 'vulnerable' category, they can only attend school with your explicit consent and with the clear understanding that we cannot guarantee in a school setting that social distancing rules won't sometimes be broken, despite our very best efforts.
- On a day-by-day basis, no pupil should attend school who is exhibiting any of the Covid-19 symptoms, specifically a high temperature, a new persistent cough or a loss of the sense of smell or taste.
- For those pupils accessing emergency childcare as children of key workers, this provision remains unchanged. This must still be booked using the forms accessible each week here: <https://www.bishopvaughan.co.uk/forms>

I am aware that you will have many questions relating to the re-opening of schools. The Local Authority helpline to assist you in relation to these can be reached on these numbers: 01792 636033 and 01792 636034.

The Minister for Education has made clear that the reintroduction to school will be a phased one, and that in *this* phase the emphasis is upon ensuring the wellbeing of our pupils, some of whom may have found the time away from school particularly difficult. The Welsh Government have stated that this is a time, therefore, to 'check-in' with school and also to begin to prepare for the fact that school will be very different for some time to come. The Minister has assured parents who choose not to send their children during this check in period that they will not be penalised in any way. The decision on whether your child should attend is entirely yours and each family will weigh up their concerns and personal circumstances to reach the decision that is best for their own family.

I would like to assure all families that, from a school perspective also, no child will be at a disadvantage educationally if they are unable to attend for reasons of shielding or family preference at this stage. During the days offered for each year group, there will be a programme that focuses upon wellbeing and upon helping those who may require more support with online learning. Inevitably, blended learning – a combination of on-site provision and remote learning – will be in place at the start of next term. Every 'lesson' offered during the on-site days will also be fully accessible from home for those who are not attending. Those attending school on the three days offered will be supported in learning how to access these and how to participate more fully if they have found this difficult. We are pleased that nearly all of the families responding to the Local Authority's survey indicated that they are very happy with the online provision from the school, but we are keen to offer assistance to any individuals that may require it, alongside the wellbeing support that will be the focus of these days.

If you decide that you would like your child to attend the days offered, you will need to complete the form <https://bit.ly/BishopVaughanReopeningSurvey> in order for us to make the necessary arrangements for ensuring their reintegration takes place safely. In addition, we will need to know in advance if your child requires home to school transport, as these arrangements will change due to strict safety and social distancing restrictions that will be applied on the vehicles. We will provide further details in due course. Please be aware that the current guidance states that public transport should only be used where essential. If you have other means of transporting your child to school, the advice would be that you do so.

I am aware that you have already completed a questionnaire from the Local Authority about whether you intend to send your child(ren) back to school for the days offered

within the four weeks from 29th June. However, that questionnaire did not ask you to identify yourself or your child(ren) and so, while giving overall figures, it was not specific enough to enable us to plan in detail what our reopening will look like, hence the need for a second questionnaire. My apologies that you have had to do this twice.

It is essential that this questionnaire is completed. No pupil will be permitted to return to school without the parental consent given in this questionnaire. If you decide now that you don't want your child(ren) to return to school, but change your mind in the coming days or weeks, you will need to contact school on 01792 772006 to discuss this.

A separate form will need to be completed for each child.

The deadline for completing this questionnaire is 12 noon on Thursday 18th June. Many thanks for doing so and I will be communicating further information to you in due course.

In the meantime, it is essential that all pupils engage with and complete the two hours per day of remote learning provided. This is highly likely to form part of their education for several - perhaps many - months to come. Please be assured that there is extensive work ongoing at present to ensure that this blended provision is of the highest quality as we all adapt to this new way of working. I look forward to sharing more details of this with you shortly.

With very best wishes to you and your families, as always, for your safety and good health.



Mrs E Pole
Headteacher