

Houghton Regis

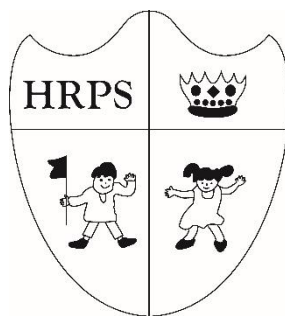
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Primary School

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3 September 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

RE: The return to school for all children at the beginning of the autumn term

Following the school's partial closure due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, I am writing to inform you of the steps Houghton Regis Primary School will be taking to fully reopen to all children this September and share what you need to know to help your child prepare for their return to school in the new academic year.

We understand that the return to school is vital for your child's education and wellbeing; therefore, we will ensure that all children can return in the autumn term and do so safely. While the risk to children becoming severely unwell due to coronavirus is considered to be low, we will continue to put social distancing and infection control measures in place, in line with the results of the relevant risk assessments, to help keep all members of our school community safe.

When will the school reopen?

The school will reopen fully on Monday 7 September and will be open Monday to Friday. This is applicable to all children in all years, and any previous arrangements to limit school places during the coronavirus pandemic will no longer be in effect.

Attendance

Attendance for all children is mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term, including for children who have, so far, been advised to shield at home. Children who are self-isolating due to presenting with symptoms of coronavirus, or have been exposed to somebody presenting with symptoms of coronavirus, must not attend school until the self-isolation period has passed or they test negative for coronavirus. If your child presents with coronavirus symptoms, the self-isolation period is seven days; if a member of your household presents with coronavirus symptoms, the self-isolation period for your child is 14 days.

Arrangements for collection and drop off

Our school will not be operating an enforced 'bubble specific' drop off time. I understand these have been very unpopular at a number of other schools. Instead we will be operating a drop off 'window' for all children in all classes. We will also be re-opening all the additional school entrances. Please be aware of social distancing when using the narrow alleyways and paths to access the school.

Morning Drop Off: Anytime between 8:30am and 9:10am

Afternoon Pick Up Time: Anytime between 2:45pm and 3:10pm



Bubbles and organisation of the school day

Consistent groups will be enforced when children return to school at the start of the autumn term. We aim for this arrangement to help reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission by limiting the number of people children encounter throughout the school day. Enforcing strict group arrangements will also help us reduce the number of people who will be asked to self-isolate should a member of the group become ill with coronavirus.

From September, children will be grouped in bubbles as follows until further notice:

Key Stage 1

Silver Classes (Nursery)
Gold Classes (Reception)
Orange Class (Year 1)
Green Class (Year 1/2)
Purple Class (Year 2)

(Year 1 and Year 2 will also sometimes operate in whole year group bubbles to allow activities such as phonics and swimming to work effectively).

Key Stage 2

Yellow Class (Year 3)
Blue Class (Year 3/4)
Red Class (Year 4)
Sapphire Class (Year 5)
Emerald Class (Year 5/6)
Amber Class (Year 6)

Although we are choosing to group the children in this way in order to manage the logistics of the school day, classes, with the exception of Early Years, will be kept separate as much as practicably possible including at break times and lunch times. We will continually review the effectiveness of enforcing these bubbles.

The school will continue to operate a soft start to the school day, which means that children will be able to come straight into classrooms at any time during the 'drop off' window. We ask that parents do not accompany their children into school and do not wait on the playground.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Please know that the mental health and wellbeing of your child is at the centre of all planning regarding your children's return to school. We are committed to ensuring that we meet the emotional needs of all our children and below are some examples of how we intend to meet those needs:

- The staff are happy and excited to welcome your children back and all children will be greeted with a warm smile and kind hearts.
- The emphasis will be on learning to be learners again and a gentle approach will be taken to include:
 - plenty of time to talk and discuss feelings;
 - lessons punctuated with activities to promote wellbeing and a sense of belonging;
 - time to play and reconnect with friends.
- There will also be activities to promote the laying down of new neural pathways and reigniting 'sluggish' ones.

It is important that we maintain proportionate infection control and social distancing measures when we welcome back all children and staff from the start of the autumn term. The school may take the temperature of pupils we are concerned are unwell. We have purchased a high quality digital thermometer that takes temperature without making physical contact for this purpose.



To ensure everyone's safety, we will be enforcing the following as part of our risk management plan:

- Anyone who is unwell and displaying symptoms of coronavirus will be asked to stay at home for seven days.
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene practises will be encouraged and enforced.
- Enhanced cleaning will be undertaken as necessary, including cleaning any frequently touched surfaces throughout the day.
- The NHS 'Test and Trace' system will be actively used and followed.
- Limitations will be placed on the number of people staff and children encounter during the school day.
- Large gatherings will be avoided. Some assemblies will take place during the week however, this will involve a maximum of two bubbles per day and the children will be kept separate in their class groups a clear distance away from other classes.
- Children will be grouped together in bubbles and will remain in these bubbles.
- Contact between bubbles will be avoided.
- Classrooms in Key Stage 2 will be arranged to allow for social distancing and desks will be faced forwards to minimise face-to-face interaction between children.
- It is recognised that younger children cannot socially distance from staff or from each other, therefore in Key Stage 1 and EYFS the classroom configuration reflects this though we will still continue to face desks forwards where possible
- Should any of the above protective measures change at any time, including the need to close the school due to a local lockdown, we will contact you immediately.

Please note that although we will, where possible, keep adults in set bubbles government guidelines do allow adults to 'move between' bubbles. This may be required in a limited way to ensure the smooth running of the school.

If your child becomes unwell

If your child becomes unwell at school and develops a new, continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of smell or taste, they will be sent home immediately.

They will self-isolate within the school and supervised until they can be collected. Parents must follow 'stay at home': guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' which sets out that they should self-isolate for at least 10 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). The school will contact you via telephone as soon as possible should your child need to go home. If we do not have your up-to-date contact details, please contact the school office as soon as possible to notify us of any changes.

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new and persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home. Please contact the school office via telephone before 8:00am to notify us that your child will not be attending. We also ask that you notify the school office as soon as possible with the results of any coronavirus tests your child has undertaken.

Supporting children with SEN

We understand that some children with complex needs may find this transition back into school and a new routine challenging or stressful; however, we are committed to supporting each individual child fully as they return to school. Transition books will be sent to relevant families next week. Please do not hesitate to contact our SENCO, Ms Kerry Hewer if you should you have any concerns specific to your child's needs around their return in the autumn term and re-integration to school life.

We also understand that some of the protective measures identified in our risk management plan may not be suitable or practical for all children. We are, therefore, committed to helping all children stay safe as best we can and working with your child to help encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene and social distancing practices.



Catering arrangements

Our school kitchen will be fully open from the start of the autumn term and will serve 'packed lunch style' cold food initially. Free school meals (FSM) will be provided as normal. The cook will potentially experiment with serving other 'easy to eat in the classroom' options such as pizza after the first week. Children will remain in their designated bubbles at lunchtime and will eat their lunches in their classrooms. Infection control and social distancing measures will be enforced during lunchtime and we ask that children do not share food, utensils, or cups at this time.

Children are of course welcome to bring in their own packed lunches from home. These should be bought into school in a box that is easily washed if required. Water bottles again should be easily washable and can be of either the refillable or commercial style.

Educational visits

From the start of the autumn term, the school will resume educational visits however, overnight stays will not take place until further notice. Protective measures will apply to all permitted educational visits, e.g. children will remain in their bubbles.

School uniform

The school expects all children to wear school uniform from the beginning of the autumn term, including Silver Nursery Classes. All children should have PE kits in school. The children will change into these in the usual way as worked very well during the partial re-opening for specific year groups during the summer half term.

Swimming

Swimming lessons for both Year 2 at Inspire and Blue Class at Lea Manor Pool are planned to start as scheduled. I am due to discuss COVID-19 specific arrangements for the swimming pools with the swimming manager in the near future and will share any changes to normal arrangements with parents shortly afterwards. I have been re-assured that the swimming pools will have very good measures in place to stop the spread of (COVID-19).

The Governing board and Leadership team are pleased that this aspect of school life is able to resume in a COVID-19 safe way. Swim England and other appropriate bodies have been very clear that COVID-19 does not spread in water.

Breakfast & After School Clubs

The school governing board feel it is essential that breakfast and after school clubs are available for our working parents. These will therefore resume but will operate where possible outside and older and younger pupils will play separately.

School Clubs

Gymnastics club will begin for those pupils who have already secured places. At this stage clubs operated by Future Games will not be taking place due to insufficient numbers of parents signing up for these. We are instead looking at running football teams for children in Years 5 and 6 – more details on this will follow in a few weeks' time.

Bags

We would strongly encourage pupils only to bring in small book bags or draw string style bags rather than large back packs. Ruck sacks should certainly be no more than 15 litres in size as larger bags will naturally touch other bags and surfaces in cloakrooms.

Communication

We are migrating our parent communications system from ParentMail to SIMS InTouch so apologies if you received this message more than once or in error.



Thankyou

I would like to thank you for your continued hard work and co-operation during the coronavirus pandemic. We are committed to supporting you and your child as they transition back into school routine.

We hope you and your family are safe and well and I very much look forward to seeing you all next week.

Yours sincerely

James Edwards

Mr J Edwards
Headteacher

