24th August 2020

Dear Parents,

**September Opening 2020**

I hope that you have all enjoyed a good summer break. I am now in a position to update you with information relating to the start of the new academic year in September. This letter contains important information; please take time to read all the information carefully.

Children in all year groups should return to school on Thursday 3rd September; I am looking forward to welcoming all our pupils back.

There will be a number of changes to school life that ensure that the school and wider community remain as safe as possible and enable us to reduce the risk of spreading the Covid 19 virus. Please familiarise yourself with these changes and where appropriate discuss the changes, along with the reasons for them, with your child/children.

The government has asked schools to reduce risks through the following preventative measures:

* Ensuring all stakeholders understand that it is a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
* robust hand and respiratory hygiene
* enhanced cleaning arrangements
* active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
* formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

**Ensuring all stakeholders understand that it is a requirement that people who are ill stay at home**

All parents are asked to read the relevant information concerning the action needed if anyone in a child’s household or the child become ill. [Click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term)  for the latest government information. This is also available on the school’s website: [www.penshurstschool.org.uk](http://www.penshurstschool.org.uk)

This NHS website also offers information about how to get a test if anyone in your family has Covid 19 symptoms.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

**Robust hand and respiratory hygiene**

We will be asking pupils to wash their hands frequently – this will be a requirement when children enter school; teachers will ask pupils to wash their hands throughout the day. Please make sure you have spoken with your child and they understand why this is important and that it is not optional. We have plentiful supplies of soap/hand wash. Please **do not** send in personal hand sanitiser to school.

**Enhanced cleaning arrangements**

The school has recently been ‘deep cleaned’; staff will, as they have throughout the pandemic, ensure surfaces and touch points clean. All classrooms and shared areas have anti-bacterial spray and/or wipes and desks, surfaces etc will be cleaned regularly. School is cleaned every evening by our school cleaners.

All classes have access to running water and soap/hand wash. We also have hand sanitiser in school and if and when appropriate a child may be asked to use this. All adults in school are expected to wash their hands frequently and use hand sanitiser. Please **do not** send your child in with their own hand sanitiser (or an alternative) it is not necessary. You should advise the school office (by email) if you do not wish your child to use hand sanitiser and we will ensure they only use soap/hand wash. Tissues will be available in all classes and we have posters around the school to promote ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’. Tissues will be provided by the school; children should not bring their own from home.

**Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace**

We ask that all in the school community engage with NHS Track and Trace. Information can be found via the link. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

**Formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable**

This is a particular challenge for us as a small school; we have limited space within school. For the new academic year, the whole school will be viewed as one bubble. This is because we have a small overall number of pupils; many pupils have siblings in other classes and the school building will not accommodate multiple small groups. An extensive range of measures will be in place that will support us to minimise the potential for contamination. Within our school environment we will be limiting the mixing of classes and where and when possible promote social distancing.

Classrooms for children in Years 3-6 will be set up in accordance with the government guidance and tables/chairs will be forward facing. In line with the same guidance teachers and other adults will follow social distancing guidelines when and where practicable; this will be adults to child and adults to adults.

Pupils in our Foundation and Year 1&2 classes will find social distancing a further challenge and it is less practical for adults to adopt strict social distancing measures with our younger pupils. In these classes risks will be reduced by frequent handwashing and reminders around personal hygiene. Surfaces will be regularly cleaned as will the resources used by these children.

Forming one bubble allows us to restart our Early Morning and After School provision; to allow us time to see how school operates in the ‘new normal’ these will be the only extra-curricular clubs during Term 1. This will be reviewed towards the end of the term but I do not wish to expose children and staff to too many contacts from outside the school community. Government guidance also advises parents to be mindful of the number of external providers (eg clubs/tutors etc) that pupils encounter; ensuring contacts are reduced will help us to minimise the number of people we are all exposed to.

We will not be meeting as a whole school for Collective Worship or other assemblies; these will take place in class with either the class teacher, Mrs Brown or myself. Children in Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2 will eat as one group in the dining hall. Children in Years 3-6 will eat in their classrooms under the supervision of an adult.

Visitors, unless undertaking essential maintenance work, will not allowed onto the school site. Parents are still not permitted to enter the school without a pre-arranged appointment. If you wish to speak with the School Office then please telephone or email. I will be greeting parents on the playground at both drop off and pick up times; please feel free to ask me any questions you might have. You can also contact me via email (headteacher@penshurst.kent.sch.uk) from 1st September 2020. If you wish to contact your child’s teacher then please do this via the teacher@penshurst.kent.sch.uk email address. Please do not send emails with sensitive information via the School Office email. All visitors, including parents with a pre-arranged appointment, will be asked to wear a face covering when inside the school building. Staff members will wear a face covering when talking to those from outside our school bubble.

Our previous school opening (June-July) experience demonstrated to us that the children were very adaptable, they showed good levels of understanding of our behaviour expectations and they responded well to the new measures in place. There are other adjustments that have been made to the day to day expectations in school; it is important that you are fully aware so that pupils feel confident and informed when returning to school.

* Water bottles should be clearly named and must be taken home each afternoon, cleaned and returned the next day.
* Snack boxes are allowed but we would prefer children to bring their snack in a disposable bag (recyclable if possible). Reusable containers must be taken home each day for cleaning.
* Lunch boxes – one box with all the items inside please.
* Your child’s teacher will inform you which days your child will do PE on. We will ask that children come to school in their PE kit on those days. Children will take part in PE in the afternoon and will go home in their PE kit so it can be laundered. Further information will be sent home regarding PE kit requirements. PE lessons will not start until the week of 7th September 2020.
* Pencil cases and equipment will be supplied to each child. Items from home **are not** required and should not be brought into school. Each child will have their own individual set of stationery. Please do not send in items from home.
* Bags are not needed in school – we will provide each child with a small bag to take their reading book and reading record to and from school. Please do not send a bag in from home.
* Children should avoid sharing items; teachers will provide ‘in the moment marking’ to reduce the number of people touching books etc. More information will be sent home about marking and assessment during the week commencing 7th September 2020.
* Homework (not for Foundation Stage) will be online and not involve bringing items to and from school/home. Spellings will be uploaded to TEAMs files that children were allocated during lockdown. Further information will be sent home during week commencing 7th September 2020.

Our greatest challenge for minimising contacts is getting children safely in and out of school. The location and layout of the school site makes distancing on the pavements - in either direction – difficult. I am therefore asking all parents to be mindful of other pedestrians, local residents etc. It is important that both drop off and pick up times run smoothly and that parents **do not** gather in groups; the idea is that you drop and go/or pick up and go. Please see the attached leaflet that illustrates how the system will work.

In order for school drop off to work efficiently, we will be opening the school gate from 8.30am and it will close at **8.55am**. This will ensure that all children are in their classes for the start of the school day at 9am. Please arrive during this period – children arriving late to school will disrupt not just their own learning but learning of their classmates. In all classes, school starts at 9am. Generally drop off is not a time that the school entrance is congested and so I think that this will work well. We will make changes if it becomes clear that families are all arriving at the same time! Where children live close by the school, and can do so safely (as they are old enough), we would encourage you to allow your child to walk to school. Please speak with the School Office, they will provide you with the necessary form to complete.

Children in our Foundation Class will enter the back of the school via The Warren. Foundation Stage parents will receive information from the Early Years Team concerning how to drop your child off at school.

**Please do not park or use the BT entrance as a drop off point as there will be an increased number of people walking along The Warren. It is important that you come into the playground and do not congregate on the pathway outside the school.**

At the end of the school day it becomes a little trickier as parents, in the past, arrived at the same time. In Term 1 we will be changing how children are released from school so that we can support this to work as smoothly as possible. We will be releasing the children between 3.15 and 3.25 – in three groups; children will come out of school with their siblings so that a family group can all leave at the same time. This will eliminate the need for parents and children to wait for other classes to come out of school. Please arrive at the time allocated to your group so that we can reduce the number of people arriving at the same time. When arriving at the end of the school day please enter the playground and stand at one of the PE cones with a ‘Please Wait Here’ sign; a member of staff will bring your child to you. You will receive a separate email with your group number and time. Please do not allow younger siblings or your child to run around the playground. If bringing a bike or a scooter please ensure your child dismounts before entering the playground and they should fully exit the school before getting back on.

I appreciate that this letter is lengthy; it is important that you are aware of the measures we have put in place to make sure that safety is our priority. The safety of the school community is of paramount importance to me as I am responsible for keeping not just your children but also my staff safe. I have asked every member of my team to ensure they are following the guidance provided that relates to social distancing and minimising contacts with others outside their households. I would ask that this is something that every parent considers too; I am sure that we all value not only our own health but that of our families and loved ones. It is important that we work together to keep our school/wider community safe and healthy. I have included at the end of this letter an overview of the current guidance on social distancing and relevant restrictions.

I very much look forward to seeing you on Thursday 3rd September.

Kind regards,

Sue Elliott

Headteacher.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

**1.3 What should I still avoid doing?**

It remains the case that you should not:

* socialise indoors in groups of more than two households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household) – this includes when dining out or going to the pub
* socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households; gatherings larger than six should only take place if everyone is from exclusively from two households or support bubbles
* interact socially with anyone outside the group you are attending a place with, even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship
* hold or attend celebrations (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and avoid close social interaction – even if they are organised by businesses and venues that are taking steps to follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines
* stay overnight away from your home with members of more than one other household (your support bubble counts as one household)

It is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). Businesses and venues following [COVID-19 Secure guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19) can host larger groups provided they comply with the law. This can include weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and funerals (which we advise should be limited to no more than 30 people), religious ceremonies and services, community activities and support groups. If attending a place or event that is following COVID-19 Secure guidelines, you should take care to limit your interactions with anyone outside of your group and you should continue to maintain social distancing from those that you do not live with. It is critical that you follow these guidelines to keep both yourself and others safe. The government will be introducing fines for those who facilitate or organise illegal gatherings of over 30 people.

Please consult the [local restrictions page](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-restrictions-areas-with-an-outbreak-of-coronavirus-covid-19) to see if any restrictions are in place in your area. In some areas, it will be illegal to meet people you do not live with inside a private home or garden, except where you have formed a support bubble (or for other limited exemptions to be specified in law).