

COVID-19 UPDATE 12th May 2020

Dear Parents

Phased reopening of the school site to more pupils

I am sure that you will by now be aware that the Government has asked schools to prepare to reopen their sites to more pupils from 1st June.

I am writing to confirm that it is our intention at Gad's Hill School to comply with this direction and to recommence school-based learning for the following year groups from that date:

- Nursery
- Reception
- K1
- Remove

Additionally, pupils in Lower Five will begin to have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with their teachers, in conjunction with ongoing Distance Learning. The school will continue to offer on-site supervision of pupils in other year groups who are the children of critical workers or who are considered "vulnerable".

The Government's stated aim is to have all primary-age pupils back in school before the end of the summer term and we await further information regarding these next phases of reopening. Children not in any of the cohorts or categories mentioned above will continue to receive teaching and learning through our online systems until further notice.

As the Prime Minister stated, the intention to open more widely from 1st June is not guaranteed and will be dependent on national and local progress against the epidemic for the remainder of May. Additionally, all opening of the school site depends upon our ability to meet appropriate staffing levels and will be in accordance with advice from Public Health England.

You can read more about the national plans for phased reopening here:

[Opening Schools and Educational Settings to More Pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers](#)

That document outlines the Department for Education's guidance to all schools and families, and throughout this extraordinary period we have sought always to comply closely with DfE instruction.

Clearly, what will be enormously important now will be to apply the general guidance to our very specific context, to ensure that we can offer as full a service as possible, as safely as possible. What is evident is that the return to school in June and even later in this year will not be "business as usual".

The implementation of measures from our own risk assessments will necessitate a number of changes to the usual school day on site, which could include but are not limited to:

- changes to some classes and classrooms to reduce group sizes and maximise space between pupils, including changes to Nursery sessions available
- alterations to the curriculum and to the school day to ensure that groups are, as much as possible, contained within specific areas of the school and to reduce mixing between pupils from different groups
- where possible and weather dependent, increased use of outdoors spaces for learning activities
- varying of the school day to reduce busy drop off/collection times
- changes to dining and transport arrangements
- restricting access to the school site for everyone except pupils and members of staff
- increased cleaning of frequently touched areas
- continued insistence on regular hand washing with soap and water or sanitiser
- reduced use of shared resources such as ICT, stationery or toys
- practices to ensure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus

Further details and instructions related to these measures will be shared with parents in due course. The good news is that we are already well-equipped to meet many of these alterations – many class sizes are already below 15, which is the advised limit per small group, and the school site offers a number of sizeable open areas, both indoors and outdoors. The layout and wide corridors of the new building lend themselves very well to safe passage or one-way systems.

I recognise that for the majority of you, learning will need to continue at home for the time being. I have been pleased with the positive feedback on our Distance Learning and have seen some excellent work being produced, lots of interaction between pupils and plenty of smiling faces (and cakes!). Where we have received some really constructive feedback from pupils and parents we have been keen to pursue improvements to the service and I know that the significant increase in explanatory and supporting screencasts has been well received. For year groups who have not yet received an indication of when they might return to the school site, we will ensure that increased staffing on-site does not impact our ability to deliver quality education online. Teachers will absolutely still be available to support you with your child's progress.

I am of course very excited to be taking the first steps towards the full return of our wonderful community. These steps will, necessarily, be gradual, and I am sure that many of you may have some concerns about your children starting back again in a classroom. Please rest assured that we very much prioritise the safeguarding of all people on the school site or working remotely and will continue to do so. If you do have any questions at this stage, please do address them to myself or a member of our team, or by using the school's dedicated email address help@gadshillschool.org

Finally, with regard to fees for the second half of next term I am pleased to advise that the relevant sub-committee of Governors will meet on Tuesday 19 May and we anticipate being able to inform parents of the decisions made very shortly after that meeting.

Yours sincerely

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