



# Lanchester E.P. (Cont.) Primary School

*A Caring Community Where All Can Flourish*



Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the recent government announcement regarding a phased return to school for some pupils, we have been working very closely with staff, governors and the Local Authority to establish what is right for our school.

The council is supporting all schools in the county to establish a pattern and timeframe that works for them. We have decided that the following approach best suits the needs of children and families at our school. It is absolutely essential that we get this right from the very start - we need to take small, gradual steps.

The government asked schools to consider re-opening from 1<sup>st</sup> June for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, in addition to continuing to provide childcare for vulnerable children and children of key workers.

## **Risk Assessments**

We have had a number of meetings this week and have made some hard but essential decisions. All decisions made have been based on the risk assessments we have carried out. To complete these risk assessments, we have had to look very carefully at the guidance issued and consider, in depth, the physical layout of our school building and grounds and how to ensure we have social distancing. Ensuring social distancing, which includes when entering the school grounds, entering the school building, in the classrooms and the wider school, is of paramount importance. Social distancing is not easy for children, but is certainly easier for the older children.

## **Bubbles**

To meet the necessary safety guidance, we have to limit the class sizes (or 'bubbles' as they will be known) to no more than 15 children. However, initially, we feel it is essential to have these numbers as small as possible.

We have 65 children in Nursery, 61 in Reception, 57 in Year 1 and 37 in Year 6. When organising the school, we have to anticipate that all children will gradually begin to access school again over time. Therefore, sadly, we have come to the conclusion that we are unable to accommodate any Nursery children at the current point in time. This is simply because of the numbers involved.

In order to have 'bubbles' of no more than 15 children at a time, our Reception children will need to be spread out over 4 areas – the 2 Reception classrooms and the 2 rooms in the Nursery base.

Our Year 1 children will be spread out in 4 'bubbles' over the Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms and our Year 6 children will be spread out in 3 'bubbles' over the Year 6 & Year 4 classrooms.

Our vulnerable children and children of key workers will be spread out in 2 'bubbles' in the Year 5 classrooms.

### **No Capacity for Nursery Children**

This leaves us with no capacity at all for our Nursery children. We realise this will disappoint many parents and children. We do apologise – but there is just nothing we can do about this. These are very tough decisions that have to be made. They are not ideal for everyone and we can only apologise for this. We are trying to make the best decisions possible under very difficult and tricky circumstances.

### **Gradual Re-Opening**

We plan to re-open for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in a very slow, measured and controlled way. The final decisions about when this will happen will be taken on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June, once all the current information from the government and the Local Authority is available. We feel that it is still too early to set actual dates for the wider re-opening at the moment.

However, when we do re-open, it will be a phased re-opening - starting with Year 6, followed by Year 1 and finally, Reception. Our risk assessments and discussions indicate that this is the safest and most effective way to welcome the children back to school.

**The actual dates when this will all take place, will be communicated to you at the very start of June.**

**This means that school will not re-open to the identified year groups on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.**

When school re-opens for the year groups that have been identified as priority by the government, the school will have to close at 12:30pm on Fridays to allow an essential deep clean to take place across the whole school. This includes the provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers.

**Please note though – for the first week (week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> June) – the school will remain open for the whole week for children of key workers and vulnerable children.**

### **Further Information**

We will share further guidance and information during the first week of June – this will include the staffing for each bubble, the arrangements for staggered starts and finish times, arrangements for lunchtimes and also how different year groups will access the building.

We just want to reassure you that whenever we start to re-open, we will do it to ensure everyone is as safe as possible. There are bound to be anxieties and questions but hopefully, all of these will be answered with the information that will be sent out during the first week of term.

Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have any questions at all: [j.davis@lanchesterep.net](mailto:j.davis@lanchesterep.net) or [m.knowles600@durhamlearning.net](mailto:m.knowles600@durhamlearning.net)

Thank you all so much for your understanding, support and patience during these very challenging times.

Regards,

*Michael Knowles*

*Jane Davis*

Mr Michael Knowles  
(Chair of Governors)

Mrs Jane Davis  
(Head Teacher)