

Whiteshill Primary School

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'We are curious, we are unique, we are together, we are Whiteshill!'

26th August 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and the children have all had a fun and restful summer and that they are ready and excited to return to school on Monday 6th September. As you will probably already know, the government advice over the summer has not changed and therefore we are looking forward to a relatively normal looking return for the children, which will be so wonderful for us all after 18 months of very restrictive coronavirus guidance in school.

The countries' move to Step 4 marked a new phase in the government's response to the pandemic, moving away from stringent restrictions on everyone's day-to-day lives, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk.

The new school's guidance states that 'as COVID-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education - particularly given that the direct clinical risks to children are extremely low, and every adult has been offered a first vaccine and the opportunity for 2 doses by mid-September'. As a result of this new approach, you will see a number of changes at school including the following:

- There is no longer a need to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). This means that the children will return to being able to mix together across the school, as will staff, allowing them to have lunch and break together as a whole school, enjoy after school and lunchtime clubs together as well as being together for assemblies and other whole school events and opportunities.
- Because there is no longer a need for 'bubbles' we will also not need to keep parents and children apart at drop-off and pick-up times. Therefore, there will be no longer be staggered start and end times in place from September. All children will be able to enter and leave the school together. **The bell will once again ring at 08.45am on the playground so that children can line up as a class and enter the school ready for the official start of the school day at 08.50am. The school day will finish for everyone at 3.15pm and parents can wait on the playground together for their children to come out. Willow and Oak class will be released from gate 2 at the side of the hall and Maple and Elm children will be released from Gate 1 at the steps in the middle of the playground.**
- The school will no longer be involved in track and trace and close contacts will instead be identified via NHS Test and Trace. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case and/or their parent to identify close contacts. We will therefore no longer inform the class and parents in school if we have a pupil who tests positive for COVID-19 and although we will of course ensure the child who has tested positive does not attend school, no further contact tracing will be done by the school. Children who test positive and have to self-isolate and who are well enough, will continue to be sent remote learning to complete at home during their self-isolation period.
- As well as this, as you may know already, individuals are now not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply: they are fully vaccinated, they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months, they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial, they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons. Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace,

informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. **Because of this, from September, the children at Whiteshill will continue to attend school as normal, even if they have been identified as a close contact of a positive case. This includes siblings of a positive case.**

- Face coverings are no longer advised for staff and visitors, however, you are of course very welcome to continue wearing a face mask on the playground if you would like to, particularly as there will be so many more people at pick-up and drop-off times now. Please do be aware that not everyone may feel confident entering the school playground and may continue to wish to socially distance, therefore, please be respectful of people's personal space when chatting on the playground and use all of the space available to ensure that everyone can feel comfortable and safe on the school grounds.

In line with government advice, we will continue to have a COVID-19 risk assessment in place. We will also have an 'outbreak management plan' so that, if necessary, due to a high level of cases in the school or local area, we can step-up our safety measures in an appropriate and timely way. Both of these documents will be placed on the school website policy page before school re-opens in September if you would like to look at them in more detail.

The main measures which the school will continue to have in place to reduce risk are the following:

- Ensuring good hygiene for everyone - frequent hand-washing and sanitiser, tissues and bins available, 'Catch it, bin it, kill it' approach discussed with children and encouraged.
- Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes – frequently touched surfaces will continue to be cleaned twice a day.
- Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated – keeping windows and internal and external doors open as much as possible.
- Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19 – ensuring that those who report symptoms stay at home and take a PCR test and isolate accordingly. We will also continue to monitor pupils and staff for symptoms in school and contact parents to fetch children as soon as any symptoms are identified.

We will of course also continue to be aware of the children's mental wellbeing and will continue to support this through our PSHE curriculum as well as looking for opportunities for the children to make the most of experiences that they have not been able to take part in over the last 18 months e.g. trips, visitors, sporting events, forest school, swimming and specialist PE sessions and lunchtime and after school clubs.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. Where a child is required to self-isolate because of COVID-19 in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC they will be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where they are unable to attend because they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 they will be recorded as code I (illness). These will of course be authorised absences and will not be penalised, as with any medical or illness related absence.

In September, the usual rules on school attendance will continue to apply, including:

- Parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil and they are of compulsory school age;
- Schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up on absence.
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

Therefore, from September our usual attendance policy will apply and all children will be expected to attend every day. The request for leave of absence form will once again need to be used when your child will be absent for more than half a day for a reason other than illness. This can be requested via email to admin@whiteshill.gloucs.sch.uk. Our attendance policy can be found on the policies page on the school website if you would like to know more.

Don't forget, our school uniform information can be found on the school website and all children will be expected to be in full uniform, including PE kit with hoody and tracksuit bottoms ready for the colder weather. Please can all Willow and Elm class children wear daps or black pumps for PE and all Maple and Oak class children wear trainers (plain white or black please, no bright or neon colours).

Please also remember that children are not allowed a large rucksack in school, even in Key Stage 2 – if you would like them to have a bag, they will have to have a book bag – this is due to lack of space in the cloakrooms.

PE days will be as follows for the different classes and we have decided that children should continue to wear their PE kits in to school each week on these days so that they don't have to change in school. This will start in the first week commencing Monday 6th September. We will no longer require them to leave their trainers/daps in school, as long as they remember to wear their kit in each week, however, if they do not on more than one occasion, we will then ask you individually to leave trainers/daps in school so that they can always take part safely.

Willow class – willow class PE day will be confirmed once the children are in full-time.

Elm class – Monday (including Monday 6th September)

Maple class – Wednesday (Maple class PE this term is swimming so they will not need to wear their PE kit in on this day for the Autumn term – just bring their swimming kit in a labelled bag – see previous letter).

Oak class – Thursday and also Forest School on Friday starting in week 2 (Friday 17th Sept) – more information about forest school and what is needed for this will come to you once we have returned to school.

Breakfast and After School Club will begin on the first day of school. If you would like your child to attend either of these settings, please fill in the attached form and return it to Mrs Angove on admin@whiteshill.gloucs.sch.uk as soon as possible so that she has all the relevant information before their first session this year.

The school office will now be open so you will be able to come up to the office if you need to in the morning or afternoons, however, please do bear in mind that this is a big change for us after 18 months of the office being closed to parents, so it may take a while to get in to the swing of things! Please always use email as your first means of communication, or phone call if needs be. It is much easier for Mrs Angove to manage everyone's needs in this way. Please only come to the office in person if you have something to pick-up or give to Mrs Angove. Letter slips etc. should still be sent in to class to be collected by the teachers and not brought to the office as this would create too much traffic in the mornings. If you have something private which you need to discuss, again, it is best to contact us via email or phone call so that we can arrange a convenient, private time to talk. In the mornings and afternoons, it is my job to ensure all the children arrive and leave the school site safely, so this is often a very busy time as you can imagine.

If you have any questions at all about the information included in this letter, please do email me on head@whiteshill.gloucs.sch.uk and I will endeavour to answer you as soon as I am able. We look forward to seeing you all on the 6th!

Kind Regards

Heather Francis
Headteacher