



Phoenix Integrated Primary & Nursery School

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Principal:
Heather Watson
BA (Hons), POH (NI)

6th August 2020

Dear Parents

Reopening school update

We understand that you are all anxious about the arrangements for the new school year. The situation still remains quite fluid and rather than continually changing arrangements, causing further confusion it is important that the message we send out is as clear as possible for you all.

If you refer to the “Education Restart” guidance (June 2020) you will see it clearly states that school should operate social distancing of 1 metre between pupils and where this is not possible, operate in a “class bubble”. This means that classes (pupils and staff) would remain together for the day.

In addition, we welcomed the recent development from DE guidance signalling that there is no need for social distancing between children in the Nursery or in the Foundation Stage (Y1/Y2). This means children in these year groups will not be required to socially distance when returning but will have to limit their interaction with other classes. The Nursery obviously has a separate site from the school and using the bubble approach, we hope to run our Nursery as close to normality as possible within the guidelines. Social distancing rules for P3-P7 pupils is still provisionally advised at minimum of 1m (31/07/20) otherwise children should operate within a “class bubble” context.

When we wrote to you at the end of June the information was based on the “Education Restart Programme” documents issued at that time by the Department of Education. However, the guidance is updated with ‘new’ information daily and weekly, so while schools are receiving some information, it is very difficult to provide parents with exact information about how we intend to return children to everyday schooling as the information changes so rapidly!

To date we had planned to reopen with a phased approach of face to face teaching and online teaching. However, on reflection of our health and safety measures we feel we will be able to welcome all children back to school in September if we follow the “bubble” recommendations. We hope you understand that by doing this it will take a level of compromise on both the school and parents part to ensure children have the best outcome.

In addition, recent news suggests that the Education Minister intends to ask the NI Executive to advise a full time return for all pupils by removing social distancing.

UPDATE – 7.8.20 Further to the preparation of this plan the Minister for Education Peter Weir made an announcement to say that the NI Executive has passed his recommendation to relax social distancing between children in schools. This will allow for ALL pupils to return to school in full classes from Tuesday 1st September.

Returning to school after almost 5 months will be a challenging time for everyone, and pastoral care and settling back in safely will be an essential part of our initial return. The initial return will focus on pastoral and social elements as well as learning the new COVID-19 protocols required within and around the school.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

Our return to school, planning is underpinned by the hierarchy of effective infection protection and control:

- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend childcare settings, schools or colleges
- cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene - promote the '*catch it, bin it, kill it*' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times)

Contact in school will be limited in two main ways:

1. By ensuring pupils remain in consistent groups ('bubbles') wherever possible.
2. By maintaining distance between individuals wherever possible ('social distancing').

LEARNING

Initially, there will be a focus on transitioning the children back to school and their wellbeing. We understand that some children may find their return to school difficult and staff will be supportive and flexible in their approach. We have watched with interest stories from schools in England where the children who returned to school on 1 June settled back very quickly into routines and how staff/parents were amazed at their resilience and ability to adapt. However, some children may be upset when they come into school in the morning. As hard as it is to leave when you see them upset, the children generally settle more quickly once their parent/carer has left. If you are worried, you can telephone the school office who will check that your child has settled to put your mind at ease. We understand that children have been at home for an extended period of time and will endeavour to make their groups a calm, quiet place where children feel safe. We also understand that, academically, children will be at different starting points in their learning and staff will spend time to assess each child's next steps of learning and take this into account in their planning for learning and expectation for each child. Initially whole school assemblies will not take place in the hall until we are advised that this rule can be relaxed.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

We will strictly adhere to the guidance from Public Health. If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, a high temperature, loss of taste or smell they will be sent home and parents will be advised to follow PHE guidance - COVID-19: guidance for households with a possible coronavirus infection guidance. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Please do not send your child to school if they have ANY of these symptoms. If you do you will be contacted immediately to come and collect them. We now have a designated isolation area where children who are feeling unwell can be isolated under careful supervision until they are collected by a parent. Please report sickness absence via phone and with a note on return.

Breakfast Club/After School Clubs/Drop in Care provision

We are not in a position to offer any of these services in the initial period until we monitor how processes are going in school. However, we are exploring a number of options regarding these and when/if it is safe to do so, we will roll them out incrementally.

The school day

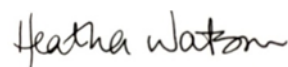
Pupils from Nursery –Year 7 will follow a protective bubble approach and work, play and eat with only their class during their time in school. This will mean using different entrance and exit doors for each grouping. We are also likely to adopt a more flexible morning window for pupil arrival and may yet need to stagger finishing times so that classes can be kept apart. Your cooperation in this matter is much appreciated – we all want our children back in school and these minor adjustments will be worth it in order to facilitate their return.

A more detailed and concise plan for each class will be shared as soon as we have them finalised week beginning 17th August. This will outline entrance/exit and more specific issues related to each class. I am also very mindful that new and additional guidance from Peter Weir is expected imminently and that this may also impact further upon our arrangements. I apologise that this may not be best notice but in these unique circumstances we believe it is the best course of action in light of a constantly evolving situation.

Please see key operational dates and FAQs on the next few pages. These should help you process the initial information and we will forward any additional information as it comes in. If you have any further questions please contact me via hwatson896@c2kni.net

I thank you for your continued patience and cooperation and look forward to seeing you and your children again soon.

Best wishes to you all.



Mrs Watson
Principal

PHOENIX INTEGRATED PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL - Key Dates

W/B 17th August –

Teachers/School staff will officially return to the school during this week to continue preparing and planning for children's return. **No children** will be in attendance during this week.

W/B 24th August –

NOTE: This will be an induction week for Year 2-7 with only Year 7 attending as a full class as directed by The Department of Education. All other classes (Y2-6) will be split into two groups for this week only. This will enable them to get back into school and spend some time in their new classroom and meet their teacher.

Y7 pupils (whole class) will attend school every day (see time below)

Y2-6 pupils will be welcomed in for induction period in smaller groups – Please see table below for times. Teachers will send names of children in group 1 and 2 for each class w/b 10th August.

Nursery and Year 1 will have separate induction times/groups/dates which is normal for younger pupils.

	Group 1	Group 1 Time	Group 2	Group 2 Time
Nursery	See Mrs Henry for induction time allocations			
Year 1	See Mrs McCrea for induction time allocations			
Year 2-3	Tuesday & Thursday	9.15am-11.15am	Wednesday & Friday	9.15am-11.15am
Year 4-6	Tuesday & Thursday	9.30am-11.30am	Wednesday & Friday	9.30am-11.30am
Year 7	FULL CLASS will attend Every Day 9am-12noon.			

During this week ALL classes will spend time with their new teacher and in their new classroom and begin the process of settling back into school, sample the new routines and rules that we will all need to follow. All pupils will should bring a snack and drink to school (all snacks/drinks will be disposed of in school ie no drinks bottles that need to be brought home).

Y1 pupils will attend school for induction sessions – information will be shared via SEESAW by Mrs McCrea.

Nursery – The induction process for the nursery usually takes longer due to the age of the children. Again Mrs Henry will communicate your times for induction period via SEESAW.

W/B 31st August

NOTE: This week **ALL CHILDREN** in Year 2-7 will return to school as normal. They will attend school as a full class group every day from this point.

Monday – Bank holiday – school closed.

Tuesday 1st September – **ALL PUPILS** in Y2-7 will be welcomed back into school in full classes on a full time basis.

Nursery children will follow induction timetable as directed by Mrs Henry.

Year 1 pupils will follow induction timetable as direct by Mrs McCrea.

	Start	Pick up
Nursery	N/A – Please see guidance on induction from Mrs Henry	
Year 1	N/A - Please see guidance on induction from Mrs McCrea	
Year 2	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	2.00pm
Year 3	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	2.15pm every day
Year 4	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	2.30pm
Year 5	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	2.30pm
Year 6	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	2.45pm
Year 7	Full class 8.30-8.55 flexible start – straight to class	3.00pm

Phoenix Integrated Primary and Nursery

FAQs – 6th August 2020

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A CLASS BUBBLE?

Classes stay together as far as possible in a “protective bubble”. For example, they will have a separate entrance/exit from other classes and toilets have been separated to ensure blocks are only used by certain classes. There will be limited movement around the school and class groups will remain in their own “bubbles” with staggered separate class group breaks and lunchtimes. They will only leave class for outdoor play, toilet and PE lessons.

WHAT TIME WILL SCHOOL BE OPEN IN THE MORNING?

We will not be running breakfast club initially, but will keep you updated.

School will open for a flexible drop off between 8.30-8.55. We expect every child to go directly to their classroom in the morning. Designated entrances will be set up for each class. It is important that ALL pupils attend school on time to ensure there is minimal disruption. We ask that you DO NOT wait around in the school grounds. Please ease congestion by dropping your child off as quickly as possible.

WHAT TIME WILL SCHOOL RUN TO?

We will be operating a basic school day in the first phase of reopening. Obviously we will be keen to get things back to normal as soon as possible, but in the first instance there will be no after school clubs/drop in after school clubs etc, other than to support parents in reducing pickups. (please see next point)

WHAT IF I HAVE A CHILD IN YEAR 1 AND ONE IN AN OLDER CLASS? CAN I DO ONE PICK UP?

If you have a child in Year 2 initially who is finished early and you want to avoid two pickups we will offer a child care service for you for £2.00 per hour. For example, you have one child in Year 2 who finishes at 2.00 and your Year 7 child finishes at 3.00pm. You can pick up both children at 3.00pm and have the little one looked after for £2 the that hour.

We haven't included Year 1 in this just yet at they will only stay until lunchtime until induction process is finished.

WHAT SCHOOL UNIFORM IS REQUIRED?

You should go ahead and purchase full school uniform as advised in previous communication. We ask that a clean uniform is put on every day. Initially we have no problem with you alternating PE uniform and day uniform as long as your child wears their PE uniform on the designated PE day. Teacher will inform you all of PE day when timetable is finalised.

ARE PARENTS ALLOWED IN THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS?

Unfortunately no. Other than making an arrangement to support young children with settling we are unable to have parents in the school buildings. If you would like to have a conversation, please just lift the phone and we will do our best to help. Likewise, we are reducing all visitors to the school – including deliveries etc and will have a risk assessment completed which will outline how we manage this.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD NEED TO BRING TO SCHOOL?

Please refer to the information sent home at the end of the school year in relation to resources (pens/pencils/rubbers etc). These should be sent into school in a clear freezer/food bag. We will provide named pencil case for each child which will be kept in school.

- Schoolbags – **your child will not need** a school bag initially. Do not bring a bag to school.
- Nursery children – a plastic bag with a change of clothes with a pair of wellington boots. The bag should have your child's name on it.

WHAT ABOUT LUNCH ARRANGEMENTS?

For the month of September, it will be packed lunch only. You MUST send a lunch for your child in a disposable bag and container as the guidance states that we should minimise what passes from home to school and reverse. Free school meals will be provided with a packed lunch. We are currently in discussion with the meals provider and will update you with any information as we get it. We envisage from October onwards there will be one cooked choice which will be in a disposable container.

WHAT ABOUT WATER BOTTLES?

Only disposable water bottles should be sent to school and they will be disposed of in the recycling bins. We are sorry, but in the first phase of return this is how we will manage this and ask for your support.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS ILL?

We will be using body temperature scanners daily to check temperatures. If any child presents with a high temperature, parents will be contacted to take them home. Children will be isolated in a separate room we have set aside until collected. We understand that young children especially can suffer with irregular temperatures, sometimes, for no known reason. However, until the virus situation improves and we get over the first phase of return we need your support and you MUST keep your child at home. Please do not give your child

over the counter medicine such as brufen or calpol to get their temperature down before they attend school.

WHAT IF MY CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO COME IN ON THEIR OWN?

We understand that children have been out of school for a significant time now and some of them may feel nervous about coming back. However, as we are clearly directed not to have parents in the school buildings we need you to encourage your child to come into school on their own. We will be able to put in place a short term solution for Nursery and Year 1 pupils because of the nature of their entrance, but children in other classes are required to come in on their own. Please be reassured we will settle as quickly as possible.

WHAT ABOUT SNACK TIME?

We will continue to offer healthy snack to Nursery and Year 1 pupils for a small charge. Until we go cashless we ask that the money is paid termly and sent into school in an envelope with your child's name and what the money is for marked clearly on the front. This should be given to the class teacher by your child. Everyone else should include their healthy break in a disposable bag along with lunch or on its own. Please ensure that the snack for break is within the guidelines of our healthy eating policy. Staff will remind pupils of this w/b 24th August. Snack should be bread/fruit/vegetable based.

WHAT ABOUT SENDING MONEY TO SCHOOL?

Until the school has finalised arrangements for going "cashless" you MUST send money into school in a marked envelope stating your child's name/class and what the money is for. Send the envelope into school with your child who will pass to class teacher. We envisage the only payments to be made in the first phase of return is Nursery fees and snack money for Year 1. Following on from that dinner money will be paid when it is offered as a choice. We will let you know when.

WHAT ABOUT HOMEWORK?

We will continue to use online learning platforms for homework activities and to communicate. This is a two-way system and you can speak to the class teacher this way. Please remember they will be teaching fulltime and will not be able to respond as frequently as before.

WHAT ABOUT GETTING MY CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL FOR AN APPOINTMENT?

As previously requested, please do not arrange appointments during the school day. We have been tasked with keeping movement in and out of class to a minimum and children moving in and out cannot happen. ALL appointments MUST be arranged for outside school time. If it is an emergency, we advise that you contact the school office to speak to the Principal.

HAS THE SCHOOL GOT PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT?

Initial guidance to date suggests no face masks for adults in school, unless they are administering agreed medical procedures with particular children. We do not feel face masks are conducive to a positive learning experience as children need to see faces to promote good communication. At present no child under the age of 13 should wear a mask. We have provided staff with face visors for work that will involve close proximity as adults are advised to have 2m distance between themselves and other adults and children. These are not mandatory and offered as a confidence measure. We have all the necessary cleaning resources in place.

WHAT IF I AM STILL WORRIED AND DO NOT WANT TO SEND MY CHILD TO SCHOOL?

We want to reassure you that everyone feels a little anxious. In school we will be following protocols for cleaning for non-medical settings released by PHA with a major focus on personal hand hygiene/cleaning touch surfaces/ good respiratory hygiene etc. We ask that you reinforce these routines at home. As well as that the school will be operating class bubbles as directed by the Department of Education. We are all being directed to open schools so you must send your child to school. If you decide that you do not want to send your child to school, it is up to you as parents to put an alternative home school arrangement in place and you MUST contact the Education Authority for advice. Setting up a home school arrangement will involve de registering your child from school. If your child does not attend school and you don't have an alternative plan in place, we will mark attendance as unauthorised and may refer you to the Education Welfare Officer. What we would say is this is a big decision and one that should not be rushed into. We ask that you trust the school with the phased reopening as we will be following all protocols and guidance put in place. It is our aim to have a safe school environment for your child and a safe working environment for our staff. Teamwork is key!

WILL THE SCHOOL DAY OPERATE AS NORMAL?

For the initial phased reopening school will be different. Our aim is to get children back into school to begin to help them process what has happened over the past few months and gauge their learning progress. They will have a timetable of learning, play and PE. The only difference will be that they will not mix with other classes outside their own class bubbles and they will eat together in their classrooms. Activities such as Swimming, assembly, school trips, Shared Education, after school clubs etc are all cancelled until further notice.

MY CHILD WAS IN AN IDENTIFIED VULNERABLE GROUP WHICH PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED SHIELDING?

If your child was categorised as medically vulnerable and received a shielding letter you MUST take advice from their medical doctors and inform school of situation. The rate of community transmission has now dropped to a level that means that the risk of catching COVID-19 has significantly reduced. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-pausing-shielding-extremely-vulnerable-people>

As a result, shielding status was paused from 31st July and this will allow children to return to school in September.

THERE ARE THINGS I WANT MY CHILD'S TEACHER TO KNOW. HOW WILL I DO THIS IF I AM NOT ALLOWED INTO THE SCHOOL BUILDING?

When teaching staff return to school on 17th August this is one of the things we will discuss. Once we have agreed how this will happen the school will let you know. We may do a telephone interview with parents, or organise an online form for you to fill in. Any information will be treated in confidence and only used to help us support your child. Please do not worry we will find an alternative way to communicate. We will continue to use the online platforms and class emails for communication, but be mindful that teachers will not be available for call backs during the school day. If you have an emergency, please ring the school office.