



THE PEGASUS ACADEMY TRUST



WHITEHORSE MANOR
INFANT SCHOOL



ECCLESBOURNE
PRIMARY SCHOOL



WHITEHORSE MANOR
JUNIOR SCHOOL



BEULAH INFANT &
NURSERY SCHOOL



CYPRESS
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Executive Headteachers:
Mr M J Roberts & Ms L D Sampson

20th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Plans for the return to schools for pupils in the Pegasus Academy Trust

Like most senior leaders in education Lynne and I have been grappling over the last two weeks with the logistics and planning that are needed in order to safely reopen the schools within our Trust as the COVID-19 crisis slowly abates. In doing this we have shared many different scenarios with Directors, senior leadership and staff and all this takes far longer than you would imagine when done remotely. This is the earliest point that these plans can be shared with parents and carers but I realise that all the talk of what might happen is unsettling for all and we apologise for the length of time this has taken.

In my [post online on the 11th May](#) I said that this Trust would have *the 'health and safety of our children, staff and families ... at the forefront of our thinking'*. That post was very well received with a huge number of immediate 'likes' and supportive messages coming through via the school offices and on Twitter. Thank you all for that – it is impossible to please everyone in this situation and it's good to know that a good proportion of our school community are in agreement with the stance we have adopted. Just like everyone else I have found it enormously frustrating that half the experts say one thing and half another. However, let me reassure you again that for myself and my colleagues at the Trust caution is at the heart of our current thinking. We normally spend our entire working lives trying to ensure that children are 'safe, healthy and happy' and we do not intend to abandon the 'safe' part of that statement at this stage having come so far.

In making our decision about the timing and nature of our return to school all our stakeholders have thought carefully about the situation in OUR schools – not schools in other countries, other parts of the country or even other boroughs within London. It is the safety of OUR pupils, staff and families that we are focussing on and in this two facts are irrefutable:

- Croydon has had a far higher infection and death rate from COVID-19 than most other local authorities. At the time of writing Croydon is the [13th most badly affected LA in England](#)¹;
- BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) communities have experienced far higher infection and death rates than other community groups². As the Trust has high numbers of pupils from these community groups we need to be especially cautious.

When all of this has passed the multitude of government documents recently issued on what schools should do will be just gathering dust in the House of Commons library but the consequences of getting this wrong could live with some families forever. Our plan puts safety first.

As teachers we were incredulous at the government's choice of the 'transition years' (we had never heard this term before and you have to question how it can be that Year 2 isn't a 'transition' year group) as the first pupils selected to return. The normal education of Nursery and Reception aged children, led by the governments own early years framework, is entirely based on 'freeflow' from classroom to outside spaces and the establishment of good relationships with classmates and adults – in short socialisation and play based learning allowing the children a good degree of autonomy to choose their learning activities and the friends that they learn alongside. This kind of learning would be impossible with social distancing and we know from our work in the keyworker provision over the last eight weeks that children of Nursery and Reception age find it impossible, and in some cases distressing, to remain at distance from their friends and teachers. The conditions that we will be asking children to learn in were they to be the first to return are entirely unsuited to these very youngest children and in our view may well cause the children great upset and thus these year groups will not be the first to return. We will work with each of these existing classes to reintegrate them back into school in the autumn term and we have asked the Nursery and Reception teams to think about

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/deathregistrationsandoccurrencesbylocalauthorityandhealthboard>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52492662>

how this might best be done. A similar process will need to take place with Year 2 so look out for updates from the Year 2/3 teams too.

In a similar way the choice of Year 6 as the 'first returners' is perplexing. At this time of year, following the SATs, these children would be engaged in group design technology projects, end of year productions, trips out and our wonderful school journey. None of this learning can now take place with social distancing in place. Rather than planning for these children to attend each week just in order to undertake more formal paper and pen based tasks we intend to devote our entire teaching resources in the last week of the summer term just to this year group in order to give them a chance to say goodbye to one another. To keep all 270 of these children safe for the final week will take every member of staff that we have but having spent up to seven years of their lives together we think they deserve this rather than being split up into very small groups that come in on different days of the week.

So that brings us to the question of who WILL be the first to return and when. All the guidance coming from government makes clear that the DfE preferences are **guidance only** and that school leaders should make the final decision based on their own experience. Our choice is to reopen, according to the provisional timetable below, with two year groups – YEAR 5 and YEAR 1. This will give us some children in each key stage when we reopen. All other year groups will continue to be set home learning activities until further notice. I would also like you to bear in mind that the government advice is changing at a very fast pace, so all of our plans are subject to change.

Our plan for reopening will start on **1st June** when our provision for the children of critical workers will return to all our individual schools rather than being organised on the 'hub' model that we have used so far. We remain convinced that this hub model was the correct way to organise things at the time and I am confirmed in this by the fact that all the children attending and the staff who volunteered to run this provision have been kept safe and well for nine weeks. We were limited in the number of places we could offer in this provision and moving this back onto each school site will allow us to offer more places – although there is an upper limit of 20 per site and the conditions for a place still apply. It is likely that any additional places offered in this keyworker provision **will be part time** in order for us to offer something to as many families that qualify as possible in the weeks up until the summer holiday. The key worker provision will be housed in the Nursery at each school, which are mostly self contained. Qualifying families from Brigstock will be accommodated on the Whitehorse Manor main site.

For the rest of that week we are directing groups of staff to spend the time in school organising the school environment so that it is safe for children to return. They will follow the DfE guidelines and will remove soft furnishings, toys and equipment so that whatever is in the classrooms we will use can be easily cleaned after each use. During this week teachers will keep you updated about what school will look like, the classroom routines, timetables etc so that children can prepare for coming back to a very different school life than they were used to before the closure. Once we are all happy that we have eliminated or reduced as many risks as possible we will ask the staff and governors to sign off our risk assessment. Hopefully we will be able to open to children in Year 5 and Year 1 on **8th June 2020**.

When we do reopen we have determined that with the classrooms we have we can safely allow **no more than 15 pupils in each class**. This means that we will need to run a rota system for those children that are returning in Year 5 and Year 1. We have decided that in terms of parents and carers returning to their work a whole day's provision would be better than half a day or one whole week in two and we are allowing a day a week for deep cleaning and staff planning bearing in mind that [our online learning](#) will have to continue for all those not in school. By having no more than 15 children in a group contact with other children in reduced and each group should need to have contact with no more than three adults each day. We would not be able to guarantee that a single teacher would take both group 'A' and group 'B' although they will complete the same tasks. Heads of school will update parents when they have the full availability of teachers – some of whom are in vulnerable groups themselves. Playtimes would be strictly regulated and lunches would be taken in classrooms. School meals would be provided for all those who were eligible but these would be delivered in individual 'takeaway' containers to each classroom. Where families have a child in Year 5 AND Year 1 we will accommodate them on the same days. The proposed timetable is below.

We believe that this is the best way to give the children a positive experience of returning to school as well as a safe one. We have been guided by the conversations staff have had with children during their regular 'catch up' phone calls and it is clear children have been thinking about the same issues as they are talking about sitting on different spaces on the carpet, sitting on separate tables, using computers more in class etc. I am sure staff will also spend a lot of time talking with children about how they feel about both the lockdown and the return to school and working with individuals until they feel safe in the new rules for school. Parents and Carers can play their part in this by undertaking some preparatory activity such as that described online

by the charity ['Young minds'](#). The children who come into school will be using the same planning as those home learning supplemented by materials from the [Oak National Academy](#).

In addition, for other year groups, we will be offering learning appointments – a chance to come in to school and talk to school staff about their learning and to pick up further materials if they need them. There will be five such appointments on offer for each class each day and these will be arranged by school staff in their phone calls to families at home.

In all the guidance offered by government there is a recognition that many families will feel anxious about their children returning to school at this time. I hope this letter has done a little to relieve such anxiety and reassure families that we have done all that we can do to make this safe. The situation has been exhaustively risk assessed and we are being transparent with this risk assessment and sharing it with this letter. The situation is not risk free, although they are manageable, and the risks involved are detailed there. In addition we are watching the local data carefully and any rise in infections in Croydon or the 'r' level may prompt a rethink or delay of this entire plan. Each family in Year 5 or Year 1 must make their own decision about whether, given what we have explained here, they feel safe about their children returning to school. This is not 'business as normal' and there will be no fines or conversations to be had should families choose to keep their children at home for the time being, nor will anyone miss out on any learning as we will be working from our online offer. Despite the views of certain newspapers teachers have never stopped working, albeit in new ways, and we will continue to support families in home learning, including those in Year 5 and Year 1 should they make that decision, right up until the summer holiday.

The **timetable** might look like this:

	Mon 1 st June	Tues 2 nd June	Weds 3 rd June	Thurs 4 th June	Fri 5 th June	Mon 8 th June	Tues 9 th June	Weds 10 th June	Thurs 11 th June	Fri 12 th June
Activities	Establish Keyworker provision on three sites – WHM, EPS, CYP	Establish Keyworker provision on three sites – WHM, EPS, CYP	PPA and deep clean	INSET & setting up of safe working environments for Year 5 & Year 1	INSET & setting up of safe working environments for Year 5 & Year 1	Teaching	Teaching	PPA and deep clean	Teaching	Teaching
Classes	None	None	None	None	None	Year 1A Year 5A	Year 1A Year 5A	None	Year 1B Year 5B	Year 1B Year 5B
Other	Induct any new keyworker children	Induct any new keyworker children								

	Mon 15 th June	Tues 16 th June	Weds 17 th June	Thurs 18 th June	Fri 19 th June	Mon 22 nd June	Tues 23 rd June	Weds 24 th June	Thurs 25 th June	Fri 26 th June
Activities	Teaching	Teaching	PPA, online learning and deep clean	Teaching	Teaching	Teaching	Teaching	PPA and deep clean	Teaching	Teaching
Classes	Year 1A Year 5A	Year 1A Year 5A	None	Year 1B Year 5B	Year 1B Year 5B	Year 1A Year 5A	Year 1A Year 5A	None	Year 1B Year 5B	Year 1B Year 5B
Other	Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3	Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3		Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3	Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3	Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3	Learning appointments Year 2 & Year 3		Learning appointments Year 6 & REC	Learning appointments Year 6 & REC

Only four weeks are shown in this example as the situation could rapidly change for the better or worse and we will adapt our plans accordingly. Further year groups will hopefully be accommodated before the end of term and Year 6 in the final week – 13th to 17th July.

The pace of change over these last few weeks has been extraordinary. The determination and positivity of our staff combined with the resilience and good humour of our school community has meant we have been able to overcome every challenge and make the best of every situation. I know that we will continue to do just that as we move into this next period.

Yours sincerely

J. Roberts
Executive Headteacher