

Darell Nursery and Primary School
Extraordinary Governing Body Meeting

to discuss the phased return to school of certain year groups during Coronavirus Pandemic

Held by Zoom

28th May 2020 @ 5pm

In attendance: Jane Spencer, Jenny Mikkelsen, Fiona Booth, Wendy Pitt, Alan Hamilton, Luke Martyr, Joanne Winship, Ravi Shankar, Joe Porter (HT), Paul Gilbert (AHT).

Apologies: Janet Deboo, Peter Hewer, Susanna Zotov.

Purpose: to review the SLT's risk assessment and proposal for partial reopening of the school in week commencing 1st June

Background: The UK Government has asked schools to look at opening up schools for certain year groups (Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6) from 1st June.

The Senior Leadership Team had already decided – in line with other local schools / nurseries – that it would not open Nursery for return as it would not be possible to maintain social distancing in the limited space available. However, the SLT does propose to enable Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to return, where their parents wish them to do so.

In advance of the meeting, the Governors had reviewed:

- The National Governance Association guidance: Coronavirus Information for Governing Boards;
- Risk Assessment prepared by Joe Porter (dated 22.05.20), based on template prepared by the HR team, Kingston & Sutton Shared Services;
- Communications sent to parents about proposals for phased reopening.

Meeting

Joe Porter outlined the proposal to enable Years Reception, 1 and 6 to return to school on 1st June. This would be achieved by using multiple classrooms to ensure that children remain in “bubbles” or “pods” of a maximum of 10 children, enabling 2m social distancing in the classrooms. They would remain in these pods throughout the day and would not mix with children in other pods. Each pod would be taught by a teacher or an HLTA. Government guidance suggests a maximum of 15 in a pod but this number cannot be accommodated with a 2m distance between children, so the school is capping the number at 10.

School will be open Monday to Thursday only. This will allow for deep cleaning on Fridays and time for lesson planning. There will be additional cleaning during the day, specifically at midday.

Start and finish times will be staggered; one-way systems and markings introduced; and each pod will have access to hot water to enable frequent hand washing.

It is acknowledged that the school will look and feel very different to the pupils, and this will need to be handled sensitively.

The Government and Local Authority have confirmed that no action will be taken against parents who choose not to send their children back to school. Mr Porter has communicated to parents that he will support their decision for their child. It is estimated that around [57%] of children in these year groups will return on 1st June, based on surveys conducted in the last couple of weeks.

Teachers will need to continue to prepare materials/lessons for children to work from home, including for the children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 whose parents choose not to send them back to school.

The children of key workers have been attending school throughout lockdown (all year groups) and this will continue.

This is subject to the Government confirming that the 5 tests have been met and that schools should be open for these year groups on 1st June.

The Risk Assessment document sets out in detail how this would be managed for these year groups. Opening the school to all year groups – currently suggested by the Government for 15th June – would require an entirely different model (perhaps a rota): it would not be possible to ensure the required 2m social distancing with all pupils present in school, as there are simply not enough rooms/space in the school or teaching staff.

Overall, staff are supportive although some have childcare issues themselves. Staff levels are not a concern. Some will continue to work from home on lesson planning/online teaching. TAs will cover lunchtime duty outside. Mr Porter is not currently allocated to a pod so there is some flexibility should a member of staff need to go home.

Mr Porter has responded to questions from the Union[s]. The Staff Handbook will be updated.

Further guidance will be issued to parents tomorrow.

Questions

In response to questions from the Governors, Mr Porter, supported by Mr Gilbert confirmed the following:

- If a child is sent home as unwell, it is intended to inform the parents of other children in the same pod. School does not plan to send all children home automatically – will await test results of ill child. The parent of the unwell child will be asked to seek a test for their child. The same would apply if a member of staff was unwell.
- A new, much better, cleaning firm has been appointed. Cleaners will come in for additional 2 hours at lunchtimes.
- Parents will be advised that if a child struggles to separate from them then it will not be possible for staff to approach the child to help, but have suggested that the parent takes the child away for a walk and tries again, if that is not successful then they should return home and try again the next day.
- School has been given permission to use Pensford Field and will be risk assessing its potential use. It may be very helpful to have an additional outdoor space that can be accessed.
- It was agreed that SLT will discuss tomorrow a potential script or guide for staff as to what teachers could say to pupils about Covid 19, also covering bereavement. RS said that he would consider what type of questions the pupils may ask.
- Mr Porter's daily (virtual) assembly to all pupils will continue.

- Hot water taps have been added to the KS1 toilets. Pupils will be encouraged to use warm water and soap, rather than hand gel, to clean their hands.
- It will be difficult to send reading scheme books home with pupils in Reception and year 1. There are online resources which can be used instead.
- Pupils will be expected to wear school uniform but it is acknowledged that expectations may need to be relaxed at this stage (as many will have outgrown shoes, shirts etc during lockdown).
- A fire drill practice will be carried out in week commencing 1st June.

Assessment and Concluding Remarks

Governors confirmed that they are supportive of the SLT's plans and endorse the risk assessment. Any further detailed questions will be sent to Mr Porter via the Chair. The governors thanked the SLT for all their hard work supporting children's learning during lockdown (particularly the measures to support vulnerable families and children), and in planning for this partial re-opening of school.