Dear Parents / Carers,

At the end of last week there was a government announcement about how schools will operate in the new school year 2020-2021. The press release from the DfE is here:

DfE Press Release

The news is positive - in simple terms all year groups can return to school. The government’s expectation is that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term (Thursday 3rd September). The published guidance is intended to support schools, both mainstream and alternative provision, to prepare for this.

Over the course of next week or so, following further guidance from the Local Authority and with discussions with staff, we will be in a position to inform you of the ‘planned’ arrangements for September. I am sure you can all appreciate that the Covid 19 landscape is ever changing and no one can predict what will happen in the next 8 weeks. We have seen an example of a local lockdown in Leicester already.

Much of what we have put in place already as a school will remain the same – promoting good hand washing hygiene and promoting social distancing. The key change for September will be that we cannot expect bigger groups of children to stay 2m apart all the time and they will not be expected to with full time provision.

Schools have the opportunity to be more flexible in their planning by having whole class/year group ‘bubbles’ as opposed to groups of up to 15 pupils in a standard classroom space.

We thought it useful to answer a few questions you may already have at this stage. Please bear in mind we are at the beginning of the planning stage and full details will be shared when we are happy the school’s risk assessment has been updated and we are able to share relevant details.

**Will school be open for all?**

Yes, unless there is a change to the national picture or a local lockdown affecting schools in the Chelmsford / Essex area. We will continue to have a focus on the following essential measures:

- People who are ill must stay at home
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements
- Active engagement with Test and Trace
- Maximise distancing and reduce contact (adults and children)

**How will things be different?**

The class bubbles will be kept apart from other classes as much as possible, to avoid contact. Desks will be arranged so they are all facing in the same direction, towards the front of the class. Children will stay with their class mates at play time and lunchtime in a designated space on the playground or field. Some whole school activities, such as assembly, will not be able to take place. Staff will be expected to maintain distance from pupils and from other staff as much as possible.

**Will children be in school uniform?**

Yes. We want to return to as many of the normal routines as possible. This will include changing for PE. There is no requirement to wash clothes every day (jumpers / trousers etc.). There will be a change to the rules about footwear. For this academic year, we ask that all children wear plain black trainers as their school shoes; this will enable us to use the field for longer into autumn/winter to give more space. We also request that all
children in Year 1-6 have their own pencil case containing writing pencils, colouring pencils, felt tip pens, a 15cm ruler, eraser and pencil sharpener. This equipment should be in a simple zipped pencil case. We will provide handwriting pens and white board pens. If you are unable to provide this, please contact the school in confidence and we will offer support, pupilsupport@newlandsspring.essex.sch.uk or 01245 442031.

Is attendance compulsory?
Yes. Unless you have very specific reasons to shield your children / family. If that is likely to be the case, please contact the school this term. The DfE have stated that usual rules on school attendance will apply and the fining system for non-attendance has been reinstated. As before, schools would be able to request fines for unauthorised absence but we feel this would be an absolute last resort. We want to work in partnership with you to enable all pupils to be back in school.

Will school meals be available?
Yes – as normal. We are planning that children bringing sandwiches will eat in their classrooms so that there is more capacity in the dining room for class bubbles and time for increased cleaning between bubbles. Children should continue to bring a water bottle with fresh water each day as the water fountains and water dispensers will continue to be out of use.

Will Springers operate?
Yes – we intend both morning and after school provision to be running but working within the updated guidance.

Will the school run after school clubs?
Yes – although there are likely to be changes, to work within the guidance.

Will drop and pick up times / locations be the same?
No. To ensure better social distancing of the children and adults on arrival and exit we will have a slight alteration to the school day. This is likely to be a longer window to enter the school to create a natural flow and children will be dropped off at classroom doors. Pick – up is likely to be staggered to reduce the numbers of adults and pupils on the playground at the same time. There will be a one-way system. Entrance gates will be the two back gates on Nickleby Road and the exit gate will be at the front of the school on Dickens Place. Locations for entry and exit will be managed efficiently to support social distancing. More details will follow.

Will the curriculum be the same?
Yes – we fully intend to teach all subjects, but reserve the right to alter content in line with the DfE's advice, to allow catch up in the autumn and spring terms. There will be a focus on core skills in reading, writing and maths, all underpinned by the school’s pastoral support of the children. Happy children make good learners.

Will there be tests this year?
The government is planning that all statutory tests will take place in 2021. This includes the phonic screen for y1, KS1 SATS for Y2, the Multiplication Tables Check for y4 and KS2 SATS for y6.

Will the school be able to run trips?
Yes – domestic trips are permissible. These will be risk assessed. The residential trip for y6 has yet to be confirmed.

We will outline more detailed plans for September before the end of term. If you have any urgent queries, then please contact the school office and a member of the leadership team will contact you. End of year reports will be emailed to you on Friday 10th July; they are in a slightly shorter format this year and focus on the highlights of the year and the personal comment for each child.

Thank you for your continued support and patience at this time.

Natalie Hawkes

Head of School