



Weekly Family Bulletin

Thursday 4th June 2020

www.halfwaynurseryinfantschool.org

Caring, Sharing, Learning for Life.

It has been wonderful to begin welcoming more of our key worker children back into school this week. The children are doing really well so far and are adapting to their new routines and classroom environments. We are very proud of them! Thank you also to parents/carers for your support when dropping off/collecting children promptly at the school gates each day.

School update

Who has returned to school this week?

Sheffield City Council have instructed maintained schools not to open to wider year groups until at least 15th June, when they hope the test and trace system will be fully in place. **We are only able to accommodate children of key/critical workers and vulnerable children at present.** As I set out in my letter to you last week, due to both the significant increase in the numbers of children of key/critical workers now needing a place at our school and also our limited capacity, we are unable to offer places to other children/year groups at present.

Why are our school places limited?

We are only able to offer school places to around 60 children at present, when we normally have around 200 children in school. Why? Safety; the government has advised that groups of children in Nursery should be 'as small as possible', with 2.3 sq. metres for each child to play and a maximum of 16 children in a group. Desks also need to be 2m apart for children in main school to encourage the children to socially distance themselves from others wherever practicable. The small size of our F2/Y1/Y2 classrooms therefore means we can only accommodate around 8 children in each.

I know this will be disappointing to others who would like to return to school. I want to assure you that we shall continue to follow the guidelines to keep everyone as safe as we can. We will continue to support those children who will still be at home wherever we can too, for example by providing weekly learning packs. Children both at home and those at school will be using the same learning packs each week.

The council will be reviewing the situation before the 15th June and assessing whether or not schools should open to other priority year groups if they have capacity to. Please be aware that we would also need the government guidance to change to be able to accommodate any larger groups of children into school due to our classroom sizes and staffing capacity, but we will keep in touch with you about our plans going forward and as/when we are able to invite other children back into school.

Please be assured that we will still be supporting children who cannot yet return to school through our weekly learning packs and Twitter challenges etc. We look forward to a time when we are able to welcome all children back into school, but know this is not possible at the moment — it needs to be safe for us to do so.

What does our school look like now?

The children attending are allocated to the same small group each day, with consistent staffing in each, to minimise the risk of spread of Covid-19. The government has referred to these consistent groups as 'bubbles'. Each bubble cannot mix with children and staff from another bubble so has its own start/end time and separate lunchtimes and dinner times in their own allocated classroom/outdoor space.

Early Years



Y1



Y2



What protective measures we are taking in school in light of coronavirus (COVID-19)

The key steps we are taking to protect children and staff are:

- Children are in small groups ('bubbles'), with staffing as consistent as possible, and minimising contact with other groups around school/nursery.
- Children and staff are asked to clean hands more often than usual incl. when they first arrive on site. We have developed routines to ensure children understand when and how to wash their hands, making sure they wash them thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
- We ensure that our children understand good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and ensuring a good supply of tissues and lidded bins throughout school.
- We have implemented an enhanced cleaning schedule, ensuring surfaces touched by children and staff are cleaned regularly and throughout the day, including table tops, door handles and play equipment.
- We have removed a significant amount of toys/resources which cannot easily be cleaned in between use e.g. no soft toys, sand, water, rugs/cushions, small construction, playdough.
- We are asking parents and carers to physically distance from each other and from staff when dropping off and collecting their children, and to limit drop off and collection to only one parent or carer per household to avoid groups gathering at the school gates.
- As parents/carers are no longer able to enter the school site when dropping off or collecting children, we have introduced staggered start/end times. Parents are given a fixed time slot for drop off/collection through the external Rotherham Road pedestrian gate, ensuring a 2m distance at all times between staff/children/parents. Timings cannot be changed due to the challenges this poses, so punctuality is really important for this to work. This is working really well so far – thank you for your support with this!
- Children cannot bring toys or other items from home, unless this is essential to their health and wellbeing.
- Children's clothes need to be washed daily please.
- We cannot offer breakfast or after school facilities at this time to ensure the different groups/bubbles of children and staff do not mix.
- Our classrooms have been re-organised and desks spaced at least 2m apart for the children to have an assigned desk/chair each.

Testing

Children who are attending a childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Although previously only available to children aged 5 and over, it was announced last week that testing would now be available to all ages.

The government's aim through testing is to enable children to get back to childcare, and to avoid their parents or carers needing to self-isolate any longer than is necessary, if the test proves to be negative.

Where a child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days.

If we suspect that a child or adult develops symptoms, parents/carers must collect their child immediately. Whilst a child is awaiting collection, we have been informed that they should be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff if this is possible. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained, again following guidance.

In some cases, a larger number of other children may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, year group or, if significant concerns, the school site.

We ask all parents and carers to ensure they organise a test for their child in the event that they develop coronavirus symptoms, and notify us immediately of a positive test please.

What can parents and carers do to help?

There are a number of things parents and carers can do to help us make these arrangements effective, in addition to the points listed above e.g. prompt arrival and departure at the time stated for your child's group, clean uniform each day and not bringing toys to the setting etc.

- If your child, or someone in their household, has coronavirus symptoms, please do not bring them into the setting. This is the same rule for everyone in our school - staff/children/parents/carers.
- When a place is confirmed at school, please explain the new routines to your child and that he/she may have a different teacher and may be in a different classroom at the moment.

Note , children of key workers who are also entitled to income based Free School Meals and are now attending school will receive a school meal and therefore no longer receive supermarket vouchers.

Finally, please be patient with us! This is a challenging time for all of us, and we will need time to put measures in place and be confident that risks are minimised before we increase numbers in school. This really is for the continued safety of your children.

We appreciate that over the last few weeks there has been considerable uncertainty nationally about when and how schools will open to a wider range of children.

I know that this period has, and continues to be, challenging for many families in our school community. We are committed to continuing to offer our support to you, whether your child may be one of the limited number of children we may be able to accommodate in school at present, or whether they will remain with you at home until the time is right for them to return.

We really are grateful for your patience, overwhelming support and understanding during this period.

Kindest regards,

Paula Bestall

NURSERY NEWS

Additional information for parents/carers of Nursery aged children

Is there any additional support available for parents who were meeting eligibility criteria for 30 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare before the coronavirus outbreak but are no longer working or working reduced hours?

Yes. If you are temporarily not meeting the minimum income requirement for 30 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare as a direct consequence of the coronavirus outbreak and would normally meet the threshold for these schemes, you will be treated as eligible.

You should continue to apply or reconfirm if you have a childcare account already.

Do parents need to provide any proof to access 30 hours free childcare or tax-free childcare that they've been adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak and so can still apply?

You should continue to apply or reconfirm if you have a childcare account already. You will be contacted if further evidence is required.

Can I still get 30 hours if I or my partner have earned over the maximum threshold because we've had to work longer hours due to the coronavirus outbreak?

Subject to parliamentary approval of a temporary amendment to the 30 hours free childcare regulations, we intend to allow critical workers who exceed the maximum income threshold (£100k per year), due to increased hours as a direct result of the coronavirus outbreak, to remain eligible for 30 hours for the current tax year.

I am not a critical worker and my child isn't vulnerable. Do I still need to apply or reconfirm for the 30 hours entitlement if I'm not currently accessing a place?

We encourage all eligible parents to continue to apply for and reconfirm, their 30 hours entitlement, even when childcare settings remain closed to all but vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This will ensure a smooth transition back into childcare when settings fully reopen.

Is there any flexibility for parents who have missed the deadline for 30 hours codes?

The council have asked local authorities and childcare providers who are approached by the parents of vulnerable children, or critical workers who have missed the 31 March 2020 deadline, to accept their codes, having first checked the child's date of birth to ensure summer term eligibility. To be eligible for a summer term 30 hours place the child must have turned 3 before 1 April 2020.

At this time, only the children of critical workers and children who are vulnerable, are able to access childcare in Sheffield. A list of children prioritised for education provision can be found in guidance on critical workers who can access schools or educational settings.