

North Park Primary School

'Achieving and growing, together in friendship.'



Bessemer Green,
Spennymoor,
Co. Durham
DL16 6PP

Head Teacher: Mrs P Monk
Deputy: Mrs E Atkinson
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Return to School – January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year, in these difficult and unprecedented times.

I am sure you have spent the last few days feeling as anxious and worried about the national and local infection rates and the current news about the spread of Covid 19 in the UK as myself, the staff team and the governors. I understand many of you will feel torn between the decision to send your child back to school and knowing what to do to help protect your family and the wider community. I also share your frustration that decisions about this seem to be made at the very last minute, leaving all of us unsure of what to do and what is expected. This has been a very challenging time for school too.

At present, based on current assessments in place, we have been able to open school for children as planned. Please note that each school's circumstances may be different but governors and leadership liaise with the LA at all times. Our decision was made after very careful consideration of DFE advice, LA guidance and after discussion with the Chair of Governors to ensure measures in place in school helped maintain a safe environment, namely:

- Sufficient staffing to ensure safe teaching and learning, maintain cleaning and lunchtime routines for all children.
- Continued safe separation of class bubbles, with predictable routines and staffing
- Handwashing and hand sanitising applied rigorously
- Pupils using their own equipment in school and not bringing resources in from home
- Stringent monitoring of any suspected cases where children and families have symptoms and ensuring these families are instructed to isolate and not send children into school.

Pupil and staff wellbeing and safety is our primary concern. Therefore, if **any** of these measures cannot be safely met, or if circumstances change in school, in LA advice or nationally, then **we may need to change this decision at very short notice**. You will be notified of any change as soon as possible via text message, Facebook and the school website. In the event of a closure **we will continue to be open to vulnerable children and key workers**.

The list of who is included as a key worker can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

I know some of you have expressed concerns about positive cases in the community – please be assured that to the best of our knowledge, all of the children with symptoms and confirmed cases developed these in the latter half of the holidays. Parents have been hugely supportive in ensuring we have received this information so we can carefully track and monitor in school, and I thank you in anticipation that this will continue to be the case. If there is an instance of a confirmed case in school we will inform parents that bubble immediately and take all necessary steps to ensure risks are minimised.

If you have taken the decision to keep your child at home, as far as I am aware at this point, absence is not authorised. This is a local authority decision, not a school one, and I will continue to liaise with the LA. I do understand these are not easy decisions to make. If you are isolating as a result of Covid symptoms, tests or confirmed results, this is authorised.



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I know some of you have enquired about **home learning**;

- for children asked to isolate, staff will work to provide learning as agreed.
- for parents who have chosen to keep children at home whilst school is open, it is not possible logistically to provide daily learning as staff are busy teaching children in school; they will do their best to offer some guidance and suggestions wherever they can.
- Should we move to a closure (to all but vulnerable/key worker children) we will then move to a system of home-based learning as you have been previously informed.

To **help us maintain the safety of the children and staff in school**, now that we have moved into Tier 4, and in light of rising infection rates, a reminder that:

- Please ensure you **DO NOT** send your child to school if they, or any other member of your household has any symptoms
 - **a new, continuous cough**
 - **a high temperature**
 - **a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)**
- If this does happen **please isolate and do not go out**. Please book a test and inform us of results, so we can advise about isolation periods. We will support families as best we can if you are forced to isolate. Please also isolate if you have been in contact with someone outside of your household who has tested positive. Current isolation period is 10 days from the positive test.
- Wearing a mask whilst at the school gate is advised and we ask you not to hang around at the school gate before/after school to chat – this helps protect others; please maintain your distance
- Please do not send children in with personal items, stationery, etc from home
- If you pick children up from after school club, please wear a mask
- Please avoid catching staff for a chat as they collect and bring children to the school gate – they will be happy to ring you if you need to speak to them; this helps protect them as well as you and other members of the community

I thank you for your patience and support – these decisions are never easy and the last thing I want to do is add pressure to parents who are already worried and anxious. We will keep you up to date as soon as we have any more information or learn about any changes; often however, we find these out at the last minute too, so sudden changes are likely. I fear we may all be subject to national restrictions in the coming days and if that is the case we remain committed to supporting your children as much as we can as we face these challenges together.

Sincerely,

Mrs P Monk





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"In the absence of changes to Government guidance DCC is clear that any decision on school closure should be made by school leaders and their Governing Bodies based on individual risk assessments at local level. Risk assessments continue to be updated and need to take account of a range of factors including local infection rates, availability of staff as well as the school's physical environment and organisation. DCC will continue to support all of our schools based on established locally derived information along with national guidance and best practice."

