



## Newsletter – Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear parents,

I hope that you are having a lovely summer and did not choose the last week or so for your UK camping trip. If you have been bracing yourself against a failing tent pole in gale force winds this week, you have all of our sympathies.

### September 2020

I am pleased to be able to confirm with you our plans for September opening to all pupils. This has not changed since our plans were released in July and follows the latest DfE guidance. If you have children in different schools, each school will be applying the guidance according to their own circumstances which will explain why each school's planning may be different.

Before we get started, remember that children in years 1 to 6 start school on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Parents with children starting in Reception will have received details of when and how their school careers will start - we will send reminders next week for those whose fridge magnet home admin system failed them and have lost their letter.

### COVID-19 and schools

According to the current medical advice, as well as evidence from countries such as Sweden who kept schools open, the risk of primary aged pupils passing COVID to each other, or of having severe symptoms is low. The risk of transmission between adults and of having severe symptoms is correspondingly high. Members of staff will be respecting social distancing and taking all necessary precautions while at work. We ask that parents maintain social distancing and a suitable degree of caution while on the school grounds - it is easy to become blasé within a short space of time.

At the end of this letter is a link to the government web page with information for parents about returning to school.

### Drop off and pick up

At St James' we are continuing to stagger starting and finishing times to enable us to maintain social distancing at drop off and pick up, although we have condensed the timings compared to those in the summer term. We will therefore have drop offs from 8:45 to 9:10.

In order for this to be successful it is very important that you arrive at your allocated time and not early or late. We will review this as we start the new school year, and if crowding in the car park and school entrance becomes an issue we will widen the timings further. As this would shorten the school day we would prefer not to do this and ask you to stick closely to the allocated timings.



If parents are able to stick to these timings and it looks as if we will have capacity to do so, we may be able to narrow the spread of drop off times further, which will give the children a slightly longer school day.

Years	Start time	Home time	Entrance/Exit
Reception	9:00	3:15	Early Years
Year 1	8:45	2:50	Infant entrance
Year 2	8:55	3:05	Year 2 gate
Year 3	8:45	2:55	Year 3 side gate
Year 4	9:00	3:10	KS2 playground
Year 5	8:45	2:55	KS2 playground
Year 6	9:10	3:20	Main entrance

If you have more than one child at St James', you can drop them off at the same time as the latest sibling and collect at the same time as the earliest. Please do not wait in the car park to collect siblings.

Please can one parent per family drop off and pick up to minimise numbers on the school grounds. Please can older, secondary aged children, not accompany parents for drop off or pick up, again to keep numbers down.

As things stand at the start of term, we do not require parents to wear face masks at drop off and pick up, although anyone is very welcome to do so.

We will continue to use the one-way system that has been successful so far. Parents and children need to enter via the vehicle gate and leave through the infant path and pedestrian gate. Miss Hayward and I will be able to help anyone who needs it.

### **St James' Bubbles**

You may have heard the government speak of "bubbles" of children. We have referred to them as pods until now. This is a way of describing a self-contained group of children within the school. If there is an outbreak/confirmed case(s) within the school, it should therefore be contained within a bubble.

As St James' is a large school we will work on the basis of year group bubbles of 90 children. Therefore all children from the same year group will be able to arrive, play outside and leave at the same time. We will maintain distancing between classes within year groups while inside the school buildings where possible. That way any outbreak should be contained to a single class.

If there is a confirmed case at the school we will let parents and staff know the class which has been affected, but we will not let you know the name of the child/family unless this is essential for public health reasons, and we will do so only for the families who need to know. We will follow the advice of Public Health England (or whoever replaces them) in these situations, although we reserve the right to make any decision we feel necessary for the welfare of pupils and staff. The advice (at present) is that we will not be asked to close or partially close for a single confirmed case, but will need to take action if it appears that the virus is spreading within the school.



If your child becomes symptomatic while in school, you will be contacted and asked to collect them straight away. Please make sure that the office has at least two, up to date, emergency contact numbers on file. Please be patient with us if we seem over-cautious – I am sure you will understand why. If your child has any of the recognised symptoms as listed by the NHS - a high temperature (37.8 degrees or higher), a new, continuous cough or a loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste - we will ask you to keep them and their siblings at home until you have them tested and found to be negative (we will ask to see a copy of the message).

### **Child minders and after school clubs**

Childminders and after school clubs can drop off and collect children from school, even if the children are from different bubbles. As with families with children in different year groups, we ask that childminders drop off all children at the latest time and collect at the earliest to avoid waiting on the school site. Children can attend after school clubs as they usually would. This is all within the government's guidance. We expect childminders to take appropriate steps to minimise risk. After school clubs (including St James') will do their best to maintain as much separation between bubbles as they have the facilities to achieve.

### **Lunches**

Lunches will be packed only initially, and will be eaten in the children's classrooms. We hope to be able to move to hot lunches served in the main hall after the first few weeks if it is safe to do so. If you have a child in Key Stage 2 and wish them to have a school meal, you need to order it in the usual way.

### **Playtimes**

Playtimes will be staggered to ensure bubbles are separated and will always be outdoors. Therefore all children will need coats every day, regardless of how warm and sunny it may seem at the beginning of the day.

### **School uniform**

From September the children will need to be in full school uniform (including school shoes) with a full PE kit. The PE kit must go home on a Friday and be washed before being returned to school on Monday morning. There will be no sharing or lending of PE kit.

### **Attendance**

You may also have seen that attendance at school will be compulsory from the beginning of September. This will not apply if the pupil or their household has been asked to isolate. If this is the case, please email a picture/scan of the letter to the school office.

### **Changing guidance**

Please be mindful of the tendency for the advice to change depending on the developing situation over the next few days, weeks and months. Please read each school newsletter to keep up to date.

### **Track and Trace**

St James' will be engaging fully with the NHS Test and Trace programme.

### **Quarantine**

If you have returned from travelling over the summer and need to quarantine at the start of the school term, it goes without saying that you must not send your children to school. If you are in this position,



please let us know your dates of travel, where you have returned from and the date you returned to the UK. You will not be penalised for keeping your child at home if your family is quarantining.

In the unlikely scenario that we find out that a child is in school when they should be quarantining, they will be sent home immediately and we will contact the relevant authorities.

### **Face masks**

The guidance for primary schools in England is that adults and children do not need to wear face masks in school, although whether or not they are allowed to is unclear. I understand how anxious some adults or children may be about returning to school. If you would like your child to wear a face mask at school then they will be allowed to do so. We will not, however, be policing this on behalf of parents – i.e. if a child wears a mask following their parents' wishes and then chooses to take their mask off in school, we will not ask them to put it back on again.

Adults within the school buildings (other than members of staff) must wear a face mask and wash their hands immediately upon arrival. We request that parents continue to contact their child's class teacher via email with any enquiries from the start of term.

### **Collective Worship**

We will be returning to assemblies in the school hall, but for one year group (bubble) at a time only, and classes will be kept separated.

### **Mobile phones and other smart devices**

We said this at the end of last term, but I think it bears repeating.

As time has gone on, more and more children seem to be bringing mobile phones and other expensive smart devices to school. In the past we have always tried to discourage pupils bringing phones to school unless they are absolutely essential however it seems to have become an unwritten rule that as soon as you enter Year 6 you need a phone. Before anyone rushes out over the summer to buy the latest iGoogle, we would like to make it clear that pupils (of any age) are not allowed a mobile phone at school. If you feel that it is vital for your child to have a mobile phone in school, then we would ask you to explain, in writing, the reasons for this. If we as a school agree, permission will be granted in writing. The same goes for other smart technology enabled devices, such as smart watches, which are not suitable for children to bring to school. Any mobile phones, or similar devices will be confiscated by staff on sight to be returned to a parent at the end of the day. If the child continues to bring the device after this it will be confiscated for a week.

### **Link to government guidance for parents:**

Apologies – I cannot get this link to work as a PDF so please cut and paste the text into a browser.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

I hope that you enjoy the remainder of your summer and I look forward to seeing you all next week.



John Tutt  
August 2020

