



Alameda Middle School

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29th May 2020

Planned Wider Reopening – 3rd June for Year 6

As you will be aware, the government announcement yesterday confirmed that the wider reopening of schools should go ahead. For us at Alameda, as I explained previously, the guidance is that for middle schools this will be for year 6. Since I last wrote to you, I have finalised the risk assessment and our Health and Safety advisor, having thoroughly reviewed this and related documents, supports the decision to move forward with wider reopening of the school. This has also been approved by our board of governors following a meeting earlier today.

In order to allow for final preparations and staff training, our wider reopening will happen for year 6 from Wednesday 3rd June. The group of key worker and vulnerable children will continue to be in school on Monday 1st June and Tuesday 2nd June.

As I explained in my letter last week, I think it is important to emphasize that school will look very different to the children when they return to school. We have made some very significant alterations to the way we are doing things in order to minimise any possible transmission. We greatly appreciate your support during this very difficult period of time.

At all times, as has been the case throughout the current pandemic, we will be adhering to the government's guidance. We are also working very closely with our Health and Safety advisor. As the children return to school, we will be reviewing the risk assessment daily. We have some important information for you in this letter.

Key Safety Guidance for parents/carers:

- **Do not attend the school site if you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19. If your child displays the following symptoms, they should get tested and if found to be positive, self-isolate for 7 days (14 days for a household). Pupils and their families are eligible for testing. This can be accessed 111 and online. Symptoms are:**
 - **a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)**
 - **a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)**
 - **loss of sense of taste and smell**
- School will follow the latest Government advice on implementing social distancing. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

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- If a child lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting.
- If a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the [COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable](#), it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions.
- We encourage you and the pupils to walk or cycle to school where possible. We advise you to avoid using pupil transport.
- If walking to school, please can only one parent/carer accompany children.
- We understand that some bus services are running, but have not been able to clarify exactly what social distancing measures are in place.
- Pupils must not bring their own stationery – we will provide a pack. It will be stored in a tray on their allocated desk. This is to minimise the amount of things brought in from home.
- Pupils must not share equipment with others.
- Pupils will not be using their locker – they must keep what they bring to school to a minimum – just a small bag with a water bottle, a hat and sun cream.
- Mobile phones should be left at home where possible. If it is essential that pupils bring their phone, they are responsible for it and it must be kept in their pocket, bag or in the tray under their desk. We cannot be responsible for keeping it safe. Mobile phones must not be out during activities or break times for safeguarding reasons. At the present time, we cannot collect them in or provide access to lockers. We ask therefore, that parents support us by trying to remove the need to bring them into school.
- PPE and Face Masks - Government advice is for pupils NOT to wear masks or other forms of PPE in school. We ask therefore that they don't, but understand that some who are unable to avoid using public transport, may wear them on their journey and then remove them when they get to school. The guidance is as follows:
 - *Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings.*
 - The guidance on the taking on and off of face coverings is provided here:
 - *Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after taking it off and after use. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store used face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them.*
 - *Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose. Once removed, make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched.*
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Important information:

- School will have a staggered start and finish time to allow pupils to arrive safely. You will receive information about this separately.
- School will close on Wednesday after lunch (to all but key worker pupils) – this will provide a small amount of time for teachers to plan lessons, plan home learning for year groups not at school, make contact with parents and children in Years 5, 7 and 8 and allow will also allow time to clean resources. It also means we can reduce the need for swapping 'cover' staff. Just to clarify, school is still open on Thursday and Friday (I apologise that this may have not been clear in last week's letter and some people thought we were only open for 2½ days per week).
- Year 6 pupils will be in smaller groups of 9-12 pupils. This is less than the government advised 15 as a measuring exercise deemed this to be the safe maximum for our classrooms.
- The key worker children are currently in one group, but as this expands, it will split into two (or more as needed).
- Year 6 pupils who are also in the key worker group can remain in this group if they need to be in school for full days – the key worker group do not have a later start or half day on Wednesday. Alternatively, they have been catered for in the form groups. We will contact you separately about this.
- Each group of 9-12 (referred to as "Bubbles") will have one main teacher. In some cases, due to part time contracts, other responsibilities held by some teachers and some restrictions over teachers' own childcare, it has been necessary for some groups to have more than one teacher. We appreciate that this increases the number of people in the "bubble" but have considered this in our planning and consultation with our health and safety advisor as it cannot be avoided. There will also be additional adults used for supervision to allow for breaks and in case of staff absence. The half day on Wednesday has reduced the need for this slightly, but not totally.
- Pupils will remain in their class base for most of the day. There are staggered breaks and lunchtimes, which will allow time outside in designated zones.
- School meals will continue to be provided, but will be limited to a school packed lunch. More information on an ordering system for these will follow early next week once finalised by Alliance in Partnership. Lunches will be eaten in the classroom, not the dining hall. Alternatively, your child can continue to bring their own packed lunch from home.
- We will be unable to run any extra-curricular clubs until further notice.
- Before and after school clubs will not run.
- While we initially asked that children to wear school uniform, following on from some feedback and good point being made about the need for more frequent clothes washing we have decided that uniform will be optional. This is also driven by the need for children to not change for PE. I know that you will make sure that your child is smartly dressed and wearing footwear that will allow for some of the daily physical activity.
- Pupils in Year 6 children will receive an individual letter telling them which adults are with them, what time they start/finish school and where their class base will be. Splitting the year 6 form groups into groups will be done fairly and with thought and consideration by the staff who know the groups well. I am afraid, due to the already highly complex nature of all these arrangements, we will not be able alter your child's grouping. We totally understand that this will already be a time of high anxiety for you and the children, and by not being able to come into their own class and form tutor or usual teachers will only make this harder for everyone. Believe me, if there was anything we could do to avoid it, we would. I can assure

you that all the staff at Alameda are excellent, and your child will be really looked after and supported in their new group.

- As I said in my previous letter, the government would like to strongly encourage parents of children in returning year groups, to send their children into school. Getting back to school in some form before the summer will enormously support children's mental well-being, social skills and academic progress. However, the government has made it clear that there will not be any penalties at this stage for non-attendance. For the time being, the school's usual attendance policy (including the use of fines) will not be used. If you do send your child back into school from 3rd June we would expect consistent attendance please, only being absent for any illness. There is more information about attendance below.

Edulink – two surveys please

- We will be asking for two pieces of information from you via Edulink please.
- The first is a short questionnaire to support us with our final preparations and to confirm that you have received the information sent. Please could you respond to this one as soon as possible, ideally before Monday morning at 9am. We have planned our provision to cater for the whole of year 6, but it would help our teachers to know a bit more about numbers and also to be able to check that information has been received.
- The second is to support with our **attendance procedures**. Please respond to this by Tuesday 2nd June at 5pm. See below.

Attendance procedures

For year 6, while we have planned provision for the whole year group, I would fully understand some families choosing not to attend. Some pupils may be in clinically extremely vulnerable groups or you may have household members in this category. You may also be self-isolating or may not feel in agreement with the decision to return. You will be aware that the school's attendance policy is not being followed at this time and there will be no fines or letters issued. As such, numbers may be low to return initially and it would take much longer for our attendance officer to read all emails sent to the attendance email, to listen to all calls and to then do the physical checks. This would slow down our usual checks and may mean that some absent pupils were not found quickly enough. We are therefore asking the following: In the second survey, where you are asked if your child will be attending, simply answer yes or no by Tuesday 2nd June at 5pm.

If you have answered no, you will not need to call the attendance line or contact the attendance email if your child is not attending.

If you answer yes on Edulink, but circumstances change and your child is not attending, then please contact the absence email or call the absence line as usual by 9am on the day of the absence.

Absence email: pupilabsence@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk

Absence number: 01525 750900 option 1

Some Practical Advice

Central Bedfordshire Council have provided some advice for parents to support children in preparing to return to school. You may want to consider the following advice.

1. Set up a back to school routine at home:

- Have consistent bed and wake up routines (9-11hrs for 5-13yr olds)
- Set up a practical chart showing the steps needed to get ready for school: getting up, breakfast, getting dressed, getting equipment ready, travelling to school.

2. Talk to your child about going back to school: They may have some anxiety; talk to them about their worries. Acknowledge these feelings; reassure them that these feelings will pass; that you are there to take care of them and that when they go to school, staff will be available to listen and take care of them too.

- If the school has provided guidance about returning to school, share this with your child. (some of our plans are included in this letter, more will follow next week)
- Consider informing the school if you feel your child is having difficulty managing their worries (we welcome this – either to your child's form tutor, year leader or our pastoral support officers – Mrs Richardson and Mrs Knight. Mrs Fox is our deputy head who line manages the year leaders and also leads on safeguarding)
- Using pictures or drawings in cartoon type stories (known as social stories) can help children understand what is going to happen in school and can help calm anxieties, especially with younger children. For older children, healthy family routines are important with boundaries around use of technology, eating and sleep routines.
- Remind your child of the things that they enjoyed about school; the things you know to be the same for them when they return like their teacher, their friends, the rooms in the school; knowing how the school will structure the day will also help here.
- Consider making something with your child that they could take back to school either to say how they are feeling or showing something they have done during lock down
- Remind your child of what's in their power—washing hands thoroughly and often, coughing and sneezing into their elbow, getting plenty of sleep, etc.

A short video from the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families, (also provided in last week's letter) provides guidance to parents and carers about how they can help children and young people manage their mental health and wellbeing during any disruption caused by the Coronavirus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnANLAcPRZ4&feature=youtu.be>

Each day will include time for pupils to talk and to focus on wellbeing and rebuilding community. They will be following activities similar to those set while they were at home, but led by the teacher with their group. They won't be working on computers as there aren't sufficient machines for one each. Each pupil will be given a general work book to use for all subjects at present. Unfortunately, due to restrictions in place as a result of measures to prevent the spread of the virus, the use of physical resources, even tennis balls will have to be stopped for now. We will not be able to do DT or access practical lessons in science labs. Pupils will sit separately and maintain social distancing. Having said all of that, we will be working hard to try to make the time in school as comfortable and happy as we can. Our teachers are working on some good ideas and we will update you regularly.

Other information to look out for

I must apologise for the volume of information coming your way. I am also happy to answer any questions you may still have, so please do not hesitate to contact me.

- Pupil Guide "Wider reopening of schools – pupil expectations and information)
- Surveys on Edulink found in the 'Forms' icon
- Individual letter to year 6 pupils confirming the start time, finish time, teacher and classroom base which will be sent via Edulink, found in the 'Document Messaging' section.
- "Working Together" guide for parents/carers
- Video guide – to follow on Monday

Thank you once again for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Warner', with a stylized, cursive script.

Maxine Warner
Headteacher