

Prescot County Primary School
Putting the learner first

IMPORTANT UPDATE REGARDING GOVERNMENT PLAN FOR WIDER SCHOOL OPENING

Monday 18th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

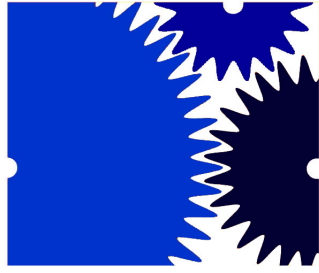
We are writing to you with some further information regarding the recent government announcement concerning the potential opening of schools to additional year groups. Whilst taking note of national and local guidance, we will try to find a way forward which is safe for both our children, our families and of course, our staff. We have a duty of care to safeguard all of our school community.

Over the past few weeks, all Knowsley schools including Prescot Primary have been supporting the families of key workers and some other children with the provision of emergency childcare during the school week and during the Easter holiday period. In addition, teachers have been busy providing a wide range of home learning activities for your children that have had both an academic and a wellbeing focus. Many families have shared their learning and activities and across our school platforms and we have loved receiving your feedback. Teachers and other staff have also enjoyed keeping in touch with families and this has been a vital part of maintaining school / pupil relationships during this difficult time. We recognise that home schooling is by no means an easy task and we thank you for your incredible support and hard work!

What has the Government asked schools to do?

Last week, against a backdrop of over 31,000 deaths due to COVID-19 and a slight easing of the current 'lockdown' procedures, schools were asked by the government to begin preparing for a partial return to school of children from the year groups Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This was in recognition that children do need to return to school at some point and also to support parents and carers in returning to work. The Government have made clear that schools will only open if the five tests they have stipulated have been met.

Schools received this information at exactly the same time as the rest of the country during the Prime Minister's briefing on Sunday evening. We immediately began to consider options as, like yourselves, we want nothing more than to have children back in school learning and socialising with their friends. The government produced numerous documents over the past few days detailing the actions schools would have to take prior to increased numbers of children returning.



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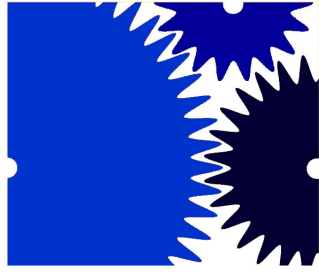
Some of these measures included:

- reduced class sizes to adhere to social distancing. We have now checked our classroom sizes and most can fit small groups at any one time, for example, between 5 and 10 children maximum
- children to remain in the same group at all times with no mixing
- children to have the same teacher all the time
- increased hand washing facilities
- separate entry and exit points
- no parents / carers allowed on site
- one way systems to be established in schools
- reduced timetable / flexible days / staggered start & finish times
- home schooling resources to continue to be available
- desks to be positioned 2m apart if possible
- soft furnishings / toys to be removed from Nursery / Reception / other classrooms
- toys and equipment not to be shared
- small equipment which cannot be easily cleaned must not be used
- staggered break times with no mixing of groups
- additional cleaning throughout the day and week

There are a number of other requirements but I am sure you can understand that the children's experience in school will be far removed from their usual routine and timetable. When we do open for additional children we will have a flexible approach to days and times which enables us to make the school environment as safe as we can and we will set out very prescriptive instructions which will have to be adhered to by all children and families. Even with all these additional measures in place, we will not be in any position to guarantee that both children and adults may not be exposed to the virus at some point in our settings. All of this will be a challenge for school staff, children and parents / carers, but, as always, when the time is right, we will do our very best!

What about Attendance during any partial opening?

We would of course like to see as many children as we can safely accommodate in school **once the time is right**. However, the Government guidance is clear: no school should penalise parents who decide to continue with home learning. Home learning resources and support will continue throughout any partial opening.



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What will happen next?

We will wait for further guidance from the government and the Local Authority. This guidance will be used to ensure any plans prioritise the health and well-being of pupils and staff. These plans will take time to finalise so we can be sure about what is safely achievable and possible at this time.

At present, no date in the summer term has been set for a confirmed wider opening of any school. Our school will continue to follow its planned yearly calendar and our emergency provision for key workers' children will continue through what would have been the half term break. We would have returned to school on June 8th but so far no date has been set for a wider opening.

Government guidance is continuing to be published daily and we will continue to work alongside each other, the local authority and trade unions to ensure that we welcome additional children into our schools at the most appropriate time. We will of course endeavour for this to be as soon as is safely possible.

In the meantime, we will continue to support the childcare of our Key Workers and other identified children as we have been doing since the onset of this crisis. Teachers will also continue to provide a wide range of online / home learning resources to ensure your children can access age appropriate learning activities. And of course, we will always keep the wellbeing of our children and families at the forefront of our minds through our online platforms and social media presence. We will continue to support you all to the very best of our ability and capacity.

When the time comes for more children to safely attend school, **we will contact you directly** with further details and the next steps for you and your child / children.

The latest guidance from Knowsley Council is as follows;

“Knowsley Council and all schools in the borough have now had guidance from the Government about how they think this might happen. Everyone involved in education in this borough is clear: The decision to reopen schools will be taken **ONLY** when it is safe to do so – and not just to meet a particular date, or to do so ‘quickly’. Please note, whilst these preparations are ongoing, emergency childcare for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers will continue in its current format until further notice, adhering to social distancing guidance.”

www.knowsleynews.co.uk/

The local authority has asked all Knowsley school parents to answer a short survey, on the following link. You are asked to complete one per family – not per child, and to complete it as soon as possible: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LVHLTGT>

In the meantime, we ask for your continued support and patience.

Warmest regards

All the staff and governing body of Prescot Primary School