

 22nd May 2020

Dear parents and carers of Worth Valley Primary School

We hope that you and your families are safe and well.

As the reality of coming out of lockdown continues to be debated, it has been difficult for everyone to process what all of this means for our work and home lives. The reopening of schools has also attracted lots of comments and speculation, which is why we wanted to provide some clear guidance about the reopening plans for schools in our Trust.

Firstly, with all of the headlines, it is easy to lose track of what the Government has set out regarding school reopening. Earlier this month, they stated:

* Their intention is for primary schools to reopen at some point from June 1st. They stressed that this will initially focus on Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.
* Schools may reopen to other children before the summer break, possibly four weeks from the end of term.
* At this stage, this is just an intention. The Government will make their final decision regarding whether this is possible on Thursday 28thMay.
* For those children who do go to school, it will look different. Schools have been asked to follow guidelines to reduce contact between people – which is a challenge when you work with young children. This means that class sizes will be smaller, new hygiene measures will be put into place, children might not be in groups with all of their friends etc.
* Whatever happens, childcare for key workers and vulnerable children, which has taken place since the lockdown, should continue alongside the learning from home support that is currently in place.

At every level of the Trust and our schools, we have spent a huge amount of time since that information was released looking at what this means for our pupils.

As much as we deeply miss your children and would love to have them back into our schools as soon as possible, we don’t want to do that until we are in the strongest possible position to ensure that they are safe and well when they are with us. Guidance is still being issued on an almost daily basis, and we want the time to consider, review and implement that information carefully.

It is also important to stress that the layout of some of our schools means that it is simply not possible to have all year groups back and be able to keep smaller class sizes, of no more than 15, separate from one another.

While there is a great deal of uncertainty, we wanted to give you clarity about what this all means for you and your families. Irrespective of what you may read in the papers or see on social media, this is the approach that we have collectively come to for our schools.

* If the Government makes the decision that schools should open more widely on May 28th, we will look to reopen our schools, at the earliest, from **Monday June 15th** in a phased and structured approach.
* It is likely that our schools will only open for Reception, followed by Year 1 in the first instance. A decision about Year 6 will be taken at a later date.
* Because of the layout of our Early Years Foundation Stage provision and due to the very nature of our youngest children, we won’t be opening nursery provision until September. It is not possible to staff nursery safely, adhering to the Government’s guidance.
* Whilst it might be possible to welcome some other year groups back in some schools before September, we simply can’t take all children back and meet all the guidelines that have been issued. Parents need to be prepared that for other year groups there is the real possibility that we won’t be able to see them again until September.
* **The provision that has been in place over lockdown for children of key workers and our most vulnerable pupils will remain unchanged.**
* All the support that has been put in place to help home learning will remain in place for as long as needed.

While this is the approach that we have agreed as a Trust, which all schools will follow, each school is developing a bespoke plan of how they will do all that they can to keep children healthy in their schools. This plan will consider in greater depth things like parental demand, the physical space, how staff will be allocated etc.

We will be meeting regularly over the next two weeks to continue to do everything we possibly can to get our schools ready for your child. We will keep you updated on this, but the next important milestone for parents is that by **June 8th** you will receive a letter with the reopening plan for your school. We know that, whilst we all wish to get back to some kind of ‘normality’, the wider opening of schools will cause anxiety for some families and that the new routines may be difficult for some children to adapt to. School will look different, but it is important to realise that the care and support we provide will not change.

Finally, we want you to know that we all miss your children. We didn’t become teachers and educationalists not to see children grow and develop every day, but in these unique and challenging circumstances we have to put their health and wellbeing first.

Thank you for all that you are doing, and your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Very best wishes

Yvonne Brown and Trustees of the Leading Learners Multi-Academy Trust.