



**Federation of Penny Acres and Wigley Primary Schools**

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Executive Headteacher: Mr David Ratcliffe

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Dear parents/carers,

First of all, I would like to thank you all for your patience at a time when there is so much uncertainty and the anxieties that is creating. Although the following letter is unlikely to answer every question you might have, I hope that it covers all the key points and makes clear the things we don't have answers to as yet. The government guidance (links below) was finally published to schools on Monday night and my staff and I are now able to plan for the phased reopening of our schools. We would be very grateful if you could read this letter very carefully as most of the sections below interact with one another and so reading the whole letter is important.

As is always the case, the safety and well-being of all the children in our care is paramount and everything that we do will try to ensure the very best support for them whether that is at home or in school. Although we will have some families (and the children themselves) that are extremely keen to get back to school, there will also be those that are worried and are very anxious about children returning, for a variety of understandable reasons. The 'family' aspect of our schools remains incredibly strong and this has never been more important than during these challenging times. As we re-open, we understand that what we are asking is that you all extend your 'family', in terms of the risks from Covid-19, to a wider group.

**Initial Phase of Reopening:**

As per the guidance, I am now working towards a re-opening for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June** at both Federation schools. As you will probably have seen in some of the headlines over the last few days, the maximum class size is expected to be 15. Although I will also need to be open to children of key workers (see **Priority Groups** section below), I don't envisage more than 15 places being required in either class at either school.

Clearly, we would only ever open the schools to the children and our staff at the point that it was safe to do so, in accordance with the published guidance and we will now be working tirelessly over the coming days to plan the detail of this. We will have detailed risk assessments in place and have plenty of time to enact the guidance around social distancing, pick-ups, drop-offs and so on. I will communicate more specific details around how we will meet all the safety guidance over the next couple of weeks. I hope that you are confident that I would never open the schools until my staff and I are completely sure it was as safe as possible to do so (again, based on the government guidance).



### **Attendance at School:**

I am very pleased that the government has chosen to mirror the stance that I had already planned to take if schools re-opened before the end of the current academic year, which is that there will be **NO FINES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL.**

The guidance states that:

- “No one with symptoms should attend a setting for any reason. Eligible children – including priority groups - are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable (in which case they should follow medical advice).”

**I want to be clear that there will be no judgements or excessive following-up where parents choose for their child not to attend school (provided that reason is related to Covid-19).**

### **Priority Groups:**

As well as opening for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, the current expectation that schools will provide childcare for ‘key worker’ families and ‘vulnerable children’ remains. As of **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June**, both Penny Acres and Wigley will have arrangements for these children. The criteria for those that are entitled to this provision has not changed.

### **Pupil Learning:**

Until there is a further change in the guidance, we believe that we will be able to continue offering learning at home for all year groups and we will use this as the basis for the provision for the children who are in school as well. There may be a slight change in how this looks and the amount of daily input we can provide for those at home, but we are confident we can maintain a high-quality of provision for everyone, as we have been doing since the schools closed.

### **Parental Survey:**

On the basis of the information above (and taking account of the sections below), I would be very grateful if **every family** could complete the short survey that will be sent via Parent Mail in the few days after this letter. Not every question will be relevant, but there are relevant questions for every family and it will help us if everyone can complete it as soon as possible as we will need to know everyone’s intentions by the time we get to the half-term ‘break’ in preparation for Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

The guidance is very clear on this:

- “Schools and other education or childcare settings should not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings. Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus. **Face coverings should not be worn in any circumstance**



**by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.”**

That said, I will have some PPE available for staff as there are instances that this might be appropriate:

- “if a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn”

#### **Later Phases:**

At the moment, the only statement in the guidance regarding the children in other year groups is as follows:

- “Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, for a month if feasible, though this will be kept under review. We will only welcome back additional year groups if the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus indicates it is appropriate to have larger numbers of children within schools. The safety of children and staff is our utmost priority.”

There is no further clarity on what this means and whether it would be all children all of the time. Our approach at the moment is to concentrate on what we do know and to plan for the things we have been asked to provide.

#### **Published Guidance:**

We hope that everyone can appreciate that we need to take a consistent approach to what we do and our best way of doing this is to follow the government guidance despite the much publicised worries/concerns about such an approach. The three key publications are listed below alongside the link to them on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

- **Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>
- **Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>
- **Guidance for parents and carers as schools and other education settings in England open to more children and young people:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>



The guidance covers the rationale for inviting Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 back first and we are pleased that it fits with much of what we had already been discussing about the phased return of pupils. One priority from the very start of this situation was to provide as much as we could in terms of support to our Year 6 pupils and we hope that by welcoming them back, we can try and give them some sort of send-off from their primary school that they all so richly deserve – even if this won't end up looking the same as it would normally have done.

Of course, everything above comes with the considerable caveat that these are all 'aims' and the situation may change between now and **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June**, but I am sure we will all want to work together to do our best with the continued challenges of this situation.

Once you have had time to digest the information in this email, please look out for and complete the **Parent Survey**.

Kind regards.

*D. Ratcliffe*

Mr D Ratcliffe – Executive Headteacher