



Pound Avenue
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 3JA

Headteacher Mr Robert Staples BA (Hons)
Tel: (01438) 351053 E-mail: admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk www.fairlands.herts.sch.uk

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Dear Parents & Carers

PHASED COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

No doubt you will be aware of the government's announcement on Sunday relating to the 'reopening' of schools as part of a phased COVID-19 recovery strategy. This strategy involves taking decisive steps towards recovery, with strict conditions to safely move from each step to the next. The government has therefore asked schools **to start planning to open for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, no earlier than the 1st June**, as they anticipate that these children may be able to return to school in smaller class sizes from this point. This aims to ensure that the youngest children and those preparing for the transition to secondary school have maximum time with their teachers. A national announcement will be made giving at least 48 hours' notice if a decision is made for this to happen.

We have been working hard as a staff over the last few days to digest the government guidance and reflect on views from parents and carers, teachers and other professional bodies which have been expressed in the media. There has been a lot of information to absorb, so thank you for bearing with us.

I am now writing to you to share with you our initial plan for what this could look like, when the government decides it is safe for those year groups to return.

We are in a very fortunate position in several respects:

- We are a larger school and therefore have a larger number of classrooms so that it will be possible for us to split Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 into groups of no more than 15 children and allocate them each a classroom. We are planning that Reception would be based in the current Reception and Year 1 classes (6 classrooms); Year 1 would be based in the current Year 3 & 4 classrooms in the upper building (6 classrooms) and Year 6 would be based in the Year 5/6 block (6 classrooms).
- We have a large nursery setting and a family room which we can use to split our nursery into six groups of 10 children accessing either a morning or an afternoon session with a midday classroom clean in between sessions.
- Alongside this, we will be able to continue to provide childcare for key workers and vulnerable children in other year groups, using the current Year 2 classes (3 classrooms).
- We are very well staffed with teachers and teaching assistants at Fairlands and are fortunate that only a few of our staff are likely to have to continue 'shielding' long term due to health conditions for themselves or their immediate family members. As a result, **we will be able to allocate a teacher and a teaching assistant to each of these groups of 15 children**. They will become their new teachers for the remainder of this phase and that group will not be taught by any other members of staff. If the teacher

is unavailable, the teaching assistant will step up to supervise the group. If both are unavailable, that group will not attend school until their allocated teachers are available again. In this way, we will be able to create 'safety bubbles' consisting of 15 pupils and 2 staff which each child will be exposed to, thus almost eliminating the risk of transmission of the virus between groups in the school.

- The physical layout of our school, on a split site with four separate class blocks and lots of outside space, will help us keep these groups separate for the whole day. Each classroom can be accessed by an external door which in turn can be accessed easily from a number of external entrances.
- We will stagger start times to reduce congestion at drop-off / collection times.
- We will open up the entrance to the Year 1 block from the lower parent car park and the Greydells Road entrance temporarily to further ease congestion. We will mark out these areas and plan access carefully to support social distancing (keeping 2m apart) when parents and children are arriving at and leaving school.
- The children will only access outside areas for play and curriculum activities in their allocated groups. Again, we are fortunate to have plenty of outside space to organise this fairly easily without groups mixing.
- Packed lunches (either from home or provided by school) will be eaten in the classroom bases, thus avoiding risk of transmission created by children moving around the school corridors and using a shared dining room. Other shared areas, like the halls, will largely be out of action.
- Alongside all of this, we will be allocating teaching staff who are working from home to continue overseeing the home learning activities for all children who are not being educated on site, in liaison with their current teachers.

The government has acknowledged in its guidance that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. At the point they decide to bring more children back to early years and schools, they will have taken this into account and will be encouraging schools to focus on the following **four protective measures**:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

Public Health England (PHE) is clear that if early years settings and schools do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered.

Nearer the time, I will write to you to give you more detail and clarity about the practicalities of how we will be implementing these four protective measures, but for the meantime I want you to be reassured that we are thinking each of these through carefully. We are making detailed plans to ensure that we can provide a low risk, welcoming and engaging learning environment which can operate smoothly within the required controls.

I know that the thought of returning your child to school will cause a degree of anxiety for many parents and carers, as we have all been working so hard to follow strict government guidelines over the past several weeks in a world where it has felt dangerous to step outside your front door. However, I think it is important to **remember that the government is not asking us to send our children back to school tomorrow**. They have said that this will only happen when the government deems there is an acceptable risk to do so, and not before 1st June. It may well be that we are not asked to implement this plan until well after 1st June, depending on how the pandemic plays out.

We just have to imagine a time where the rate of transmission of the virus has significantly dropped; new daily cases of COVID-19 have slowed dramatically; and the world is beginning to feel like it is starting to

return to normal. We need to start to rebuild a healthy confidence in our children and reassure them that there will be a time soon where the risks are so small that it is OK to feel safe outside their homes. We need to support them in taking these small steps to getting back to their lovely school, having fun with their friends and enjoying their learning. We owe them this right to start experiencing the fullness of their childhoods again.

Thank you for all your support over the past months. I want to pay tribute to all the hard work you have put in as parents and carers – I know that you have been rising to the considerable challenge of supporting your children with home learning and you have been doing such a great job! I would now ask that you start to prepare your child gently for coming back to school and start talking to them about any worries they might have.

I also want to thank all the staff at Fairlands for their unending positivity and commitment. We are missing the children so much and can't wait to see them all back at school again. It has been so heartening to see the whole Fairlands community pull together to face this unprecedented challenge head on. We now need to draw on that same spirit of positive collaboration to start the process of recovery and building the best future for our children.

I am sure you will have a whole host of questions! Some of these questions may be answered by reading the government guidance for parents and carers here: [Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers](#). I will be writing to you again before we enter this next phase giving you more detailed information about all the practicalities, including which group your Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 child will be in and who their teaching staff will be. In the meantime, please do feel free to drop us an email you have any other questions, thoughts or enquiries to the Parent Forum email address: parentforum@fairlands.herts.sch.uk. We will monitor this daily and will either respond to your questions as part of a whole school letter, or individually where necessary.

Lastly, I am sure that you will appreciate that this next phase will take a considerable amount of time and effort to plan and prepare for these new requirements. Due to this, **we have made the decision that the school will be completely closed for the normal May Half Term from Monday 25th May to Friday 29th May**. We will not be providing home learning activities that week (parents and children have been working hard and need a break from home learning!) and we will not be offering emergency childcare on site. We will be writing to critical workers separately to support them in making alternative arrangements.

Kindest regards



Robert Staples
Headteacher