

**1<sup>st</sup> September, 2020**

**Coronavirus - COVID-19 – Return to Schools Update**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that everyone in your family is well and you have enjoyed a good summer.

We will all have seen increased numbers of people in the County over the summer holiday to the point Devon and Cornwall Police were advising people not to travel to the area. Thankfully, people seem to have maintained social-distancing, cleansed hands and worn masks where necessary keeping Coronavirus cases low across the south west and in Cornwall.

Continuing with the measures in place we are confident we can open all our schools to all pupils on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September. All 14 schools have had various building works being managed over the summer holiday to enhance provision. We will have spent £1.1 million on projects when they are all completed this year. All schools have had a thorough deep clean and stocks of cleaning materials and PPE have been replenished. We now only have two members of staff who will be unable to return to work meaning we have 368 people available, refreshed after the holiday and ready to help your children make the return to school an enjoyable one.

Most children will have been able to go back to school in the Summer Term, but some children will not have been in school since measures were introduced at the end of March. We are mindful that some children and you as parents will be feeling nervous about returning, staff will make this transition as smooth as they can. We will continue to have the social distancing measures in place for adults and encourage adults to wear masks if in groups. According to the science, children so far seem to be at much lower risk so will not need to wear a mask at all. For children to manage masks and not keep touching their face would be extraordinarily difficult.

As a Trust, we have tried to keep you informed of the changing picture during last term and will continue to do so this term. It would be helpful if you could complete the short survey found in the following link:

<https://www.bridgeschools.co.uk/Parent-Child-Questionnaire>

This will give us a picture of the number of children returning to school and will help us to learn from the things that were helpful during lockdown and any other suggestions you might have.

We will need to continue to be vigilant to avoid schools needing to close in the future. Everyone needs to play their part in being sensible with whom we choose to mix, in what circumstances and taking precautions with social distancing, hand washing and wearing face coverings. As a reminder - schools will operate 'bubbles' of children and staff. We will try to limit any cross over in school where possible but the virus, if it comes, will be brought into school through someone's contamination. If someone contracts the virus through a confirmed case, we will contact Public Health England who will advise us of the next steps to take. At the moment, the advice is to close the 'bubble' the staff member or child is associated with for 14 days. This will disrupt schooling and work patterns for parents. It is something we obviously want to avoid, if possible. To keep schools open we all need to be careful. Coughs, colds and normal winter flu will continue to become more prevalent as we move into the colder months. If you, or a family member feel unwell, please stay at home until you or your children feel well again. If you think anyone has COVID-19 symptoms, please get a test before returning to school. If there are pressures for you at work, we would all be grateful if you could find alternative childcare to school until everyone is well.

We will be continuing the school closure on Friday afternoons after lunch for at least the first half term in the Autumn in order that we can maintain our hygiene levels. We will make provision where possible for those who need to continue to work and rely on us for childcare.

Staff will be in school on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September preparing learning spaces and reviewing catch-up programmes. Staff will be briefed on any change of arrangements at each school site and made aware of the information they need to help your children have an enjoyable start to the term. Heads will write to you separately nearer the end of the week advising you of specific timings for arrival and departure from school with any other school specific arrangements needed.

Thank you for your support and encouragement with staff in schools, I wish everyone a successful start to term.

With all good wishes,

Adrian Massey and everyone at Bridge Schools.