



Head Teacher: Dr R M H Beadnall
Mount Leven Road, Yarm, Stockton. TS15 9RJ
Telephone/Fax: (01642) 783684
E-mail: levendale@levendale.org.uk
Web: <http://www.levendaleprimary.org.uk>
Smartphone app: <http://www.jsa4.me/levendale>

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to thank you all for the support you have offered to the school during these unprecedented times since we closed to the majority of pupils on March 20th. I would also like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all my staff: they have done an amazing job over the last two months and will continue to do so to support the Levendale family.

We are all keen to get our children back into school and for some semblance of normality to return (or is this the new 'normal?'), but it must be safe to do so. Balancing the DFE guidance against our Health and Safety obligations has been extremely difficult and we have hit several metaphorical brick walls along the way. In all honesty, the position we find ourselves in is an invidious one and it is absolutely clear that there is no way through this that can cater for all needs or provide a cast-iron guarantee around safety – it simply isn't possible within the directives we are being handed down from Government. All we are able to do as school leaders is create a plan and an offer for provision that you then take up or decline as appropriate.

The letter that has been issued from The 1590 Trust sets out the rationale for how we have organised a phased return to school and you are hopefully aware by now that we are not re-opening our Nursery as things stand: Nursery key worker children can still be booked in to our key worker provision however. Initially, we are admitting Reception and Year 1 children from June 1st, plus our existing key worker provision will continue to operate as it has done since March 23rd. The numbers accessing these three levels of provision will dictate whether we are able to safely staff a Y6 provision or not. In formulating this provision, we used the Government guidance, which was very clear that the immediate priority should be given to the youngest children and those children of key workers.

My parental surveys that were completed last week showed a very rough 50/50 split between parents who were firmly in the 'yes/no' category for sending their children back in to school and those who were 'unsure'. This is entirely understandable as you all had very valid concerns around distancing, safety, hygiene, the way teaching groups would be organised etc.

Our job has been to create a plan for the return of some year groups where the potential risk can be minimised as much as possible – this we have done. However, as the inimitable Mr Michael Gove MP has said, we will never be in a position where there is zero risk and you, as parents, must make your own decisions as to whether you feel able to send your children back to school if they are eligible to do so. I intend to set out our plans in this letter to better inform you about the systems we have put in place so that you feel more able to make a decision one way or another: as I have said



previously, there are no penalties for parents who do not feel able to send their children back; there will be no referral to the Local Authority for non-attendance and no-one will question your decision. It is your choice to make.

We are following all Government guidance, have endeavoured to base our plans around that principle and will encourage all children to demonstrate appropriate distancing – this will extend to all staff and all parents who access the sites. Signs will remind parents and carers to observe distancing at drop-off and pick-up; entry to school has been carefully considered to reduce contact between different groups of children; classrooms have been set up to maximise distancing and resourcing has been planned so that cross-contamination will not occur. Your agreement to adhere to these principles will be key and I ask every member of our school community to respect the guidelines that we will be working within.

The key areas where distancing cannot, in any way, be adhered to is where a child requires first aid, intimate care or comfort. There are horror stories in the media of some schools saying that, in the case of first aid, children would be handed wipes/plasters and asked to get on with it themselves. This will not be the case at Levendale. PPE is available to all staff (it will not be worn for routine working with children) and will be worn in the case of first aid or intimate care – this will consist of mask, glasses, apron and gloves. This PPE would also be worn in the case of a child or adult displaying symptoms of COVID-19 and requiring supervision whilst being isolated from the remainder of the group.

The way we will be operating is based on a 'bubble' system: a bubble consists of a group of children (no more than fifteen) with a teacher and TA attached to each bubble. **Provisional staffing is shown in the appendix to this letter but this is not guaranteed: staff will be allocated to final bubbles once we have a better idea of numbers.** Children in these bubbles will NOT be allowed to mix with children from other bubbles at any time whilst in school and, as far as practical, staff will not operate within other bubbles either.

On initial entry to school, children will use alcohol gel prior to organised handwashing and stringent handwashing will be repeated across the day. Prior to school 'closing' on March 20th, some children were experiencing severe discomfort and reddening of the hands due to repeated washing. If you would like your child to bring hand cream to alleviate this, please send it in with them – this MUST not be shared with others.

If your child becomes unwell at home (for whatever reason) or anyone in the household develops symptoms of COVID-19, **please do not send your child into school.** Should a child in school become unwell and/or develop symptoms of COVID-19, they would immediately be isolated and supervised by staff wearing appropriate PPE – they would then need collecting and parents would be required to organise a test. In line with Trust policy, all parents of children in that bubble would then need to be collected as soon as possible and would need to self-isolate until the test result was known. If the test is positive, a 14-day isolation period would apply. If the test is negative, that bubble would need to self-isolate for 7 days. The same policy applies to the staff in that bubble. It is the parent's responsibility to inform us if the child (or anyone living in the same household) has developed symptoms of COVID-19 whilst at home – the same isolation and testing protocol would then apply. If the child has siblings in other bubbles, those bubbles would also be subject to the same conditions.

Lunch breaks and work breaks will also be adjusted to fit the revised timings and children will be supervised by the same bubble staff for continuity. Outdoor time and/or location will be staggered so there is no mixing of children from different bubbles. We are not proposing to divide out outdoor space into 2m² chunks and instruct children to stay in their own little zone – we are reminding them

of the need for distancing wherever possible but allowing them, within reason, to play with children in the same bubble.

Stockton Catering would be able to offer a limited cold 'grab bag' lunch provision, but there would be little choice for children – if parents would prefer to send their child in with a packed lunch of their own, that is fine. Lunch boxes, medication that may be necessary, a water bottle and hand cream are the only things we would expect to see coming in to school from home. Children should NOT be bringing PE kits and we are asking them to dress in **freshly-laundered clothing each day** – it is your choice whether this is uniform or not, but we are hoping to utilise the outdoor spaces as much as possible during the day and therefore comfortable non-uniform clothes would be preferable. Trainers or other sturdy shoes should be worn: sandals, Ugg boots etc are not suitable.

One critical issue is around parents requiring provision from Miss Keegan's breakfast and after-school club: as things stand, **only key worker parents would be able to access this** and if your child accesses provision from this club, they would have to remain in the key worker bubble. Due to potential mixing, they would NOT be able to go back into provision with their year group bubbles: for example, if a child in Year 1 accesses breakfast or after-school provision, they would not be able to go into a Y1 bubble and would remain in key worker provision.

Once we have established firm numbers of children returning to school, we will allocate each child a bubble – this will be entirely at our discretion and children cannot change bubbles once allocated. We will do our best to take social/friendship groups into consideration but we cannot guarantee that your child will be in the same bubble as all the children you or they might want them to be with.

So that we are able to get an accurate picture of provision and begin to allocate children to bubbles, it is essential that parents use the booking forms I have created to book their children into provision, whether that is key worker, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6. PLEASE NOTE: key worker children in Reception, Year 1 and Y6 would go in to those year group bubbles (unless they are accessing Miss Keegan's before- and after-school club as detailed above), NOT our key worker provision bubbles, which would operate for Nursery, Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5 key worker children. If you have not used our key worker provision before, evidence of key worker status may be required. **Please note that key worker provision is to be used only where there is no other option: only one parent needs to be a key worker, but if one parent or carer is able to look after the child at home, key worker provision should not be sought.**

These are the links that should be used for booking – they will allow you to request provision for the first three weeks (two weeks in the case of Y6) i.e. w/c June 1st, June 8th and June 15th. **I would like to respectfully request that all bookings are made by Tuesday 26th May so that we can make the appropriate arrangements for staffing and finalising resourcing etc.**

Reception: <https://forms.gle/uD7sq96Q4LDkAi2WA>

Year 1: <https://forms.gle/Hp1PQmmsD6B7U3Sz5>

Key workers: <https://forms.gle/nhg8pm5QvQRjj24p7> (Nursery and Y2-Y5)

Year 6: <https://forms.gle/N2pGazDnwiQqNC8VA>

I very much appreciate that these are difficult times for us all – there can no be one solution that works for everyone and you all have to make a decision based on what you feel is in your child's best interests. I have tried to outline our response to the Government's request and give as much details as possible at this stage of our plans for reopening to certain year groups.

We are still working on our curriculum offer and the amount of work we would realistically be able to set for those children who are either not eligible to return to school or whose parents are not intending to send them back in – we need to strike a balance between educational provision and also ensuring the emotional wellbeing of our children. I will be in touch shortly to clarify our home learning arrangements for children who are not attending school – you will not be left to ad-lib! Make no mistake, school will not look or feel the same as it did due to the stringent controls we have been asked to put into place and this may well be upsetting to children. We will try to minimise the level of upset that is caused but inevitably there will be many issues arising from the enforcement of distancing, limitations around numbers in toilet areas and numerous other changes to the way we have worked in the past. That is something else you will need to factor in to any decision making process you go through as parents.

I also realise that this letter may well raise more queries from you as parents: I strongly suspect that I will not physically be able to deal with all queries that may come and might have to release a FAQs document once queries start coming through that concern common issues. Equally, I will not be in a position to have individual conversations with parents on this matter. I trust you are able to understand and appreciate this.

I would ask that **all** queries are directed to levendale@levendale.org.uk – even if, for whatever reason, you have my personal work email address. I would prefer to keep my personal work email purely for dealing with DFE matters, Trust matters, conversations with my staff and other colleagues across Stockton plus the other agencies with whom I need professional contact.

We, as the Levendale family, have a long tradition of working together and respecting the boundaries and rules that are put in place. Now, more than ever before, we will be relying on each other to play our part in ensuring the continued safety of my staff and their families, your children and yourselves.

Take care of yourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. R. Beadnall
Headteacher

Mrs. L. Dowson
Chair of Governors

APPENDIX

Our plans for accommodating our **Reception** children is as follows:

- Children will be split into two bubbles: one bubble will be under the care of Miss Waring and based in the Nursery classroom; the other will be under the care of Mrs Stonehouse and based in the Reception classroom. The doors between Nursery and Reception would be closed and a barrier erected to ensure no movement between the bubbles. Nursery bubble would use the Nursery toilets; the Reception bubble would use the Reception toilets outside the classroom.

Our plan for accommodating our **Year 1** children is as follows:

- Children will be split into two bubbles: one bubble will be under the care of Mrs McMullen/Mrs Whincup and based in the Y3 classroom; the other will be under the care of Mrs McFarlane/Mrs Kirk and based in the Y2 classroom. These two bubbles would use the toilets in the Y2/3 cloakroom and a system has been planned to limit access to the toilets to one child at a time.

Our plan for accommodating our **key worker** children is as follows:

- If numbers remain less than fifteen, one bubble would operate under the care of Mr Abbott and would be based in the school hall; if numbers are higher, we would need to bring either Mrs Butterfield or Mrs Carnelly into key worker provision and this would affect our ability to put provision into place for Y6s from 8th June. Children in this group would use the accessible toilet in the KS2 library area. It is likely that Nursery key worker children will access one of the Reception bubbles, depending on numbers, so that they are in a more age-appropriate setting with more children of the same approximate age (unless they are accessing breakfast club of after-school provision – see paragraph further in this letter). **Please note that key worker provision is to be used only where there is no other option: only one parent needs to be a key worker, but if one parent or carer is able to look after the child at home, key worker provision should not be sought.**

If we are able to accommodate Y6 pupils from June 8th, the plan is as follows:

- Children will be split into two bubbles: one bubble under the care of Mrs Carnelly and based in the Y6 classroom; the other under the care of Mrs Butterfield and based in the Y5 or Y4 classroom. These two bubbles would use the toilets in the Y4/5 cloakroom and a system has been planned to limit access to the toilets to one child at a time.

The school day timings have had to be altered to allow for a staggered start/finish so that we can minimise interaction between different groups of children and parents:

- Reception – 8:30-2:30
- Year 1 – 8:45-2:45
- Key workers – 9:00-3:15
- Year 6 – 9:00-3:00

If you have children in multiple year groups, please work on the principle of them all coming in at 9.00am, observing all distancing protocols. They should then be collected from individual bubble rooms using exit/entry protocols below when you would usually collect the earliest child, based on the timings shown above.

The entry arrangements to school will also be different and each bubble will enter school by a different entrance and/or a different time. We ask that parents and carers abide absolutely by these entry/exit protocols. **Only one parent/carer per child or sibling group please.**

Reception bubble 1 (Miss Waring – Nursery)

- Enter/exit the school site via the Key Stage Two playground gate and queue/enter via the Nursery entrance, observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 8:30am.

Reception bubble 2 (Mrs Stonehouse – Reception)

- Enter/exit the school site via the main front gate and queue/enter via the Teddy Bear room entrance (following signage), observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 8:30am.

Year 1 bubble 1 (Mrs McMullen/Mrs Whincup)

- Enter/exit the school site via the Key Stage Two playground gate and queue/enter via the Y2/3 cloakroom entrance (following signage), observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 8:45am.

Year 2 bubble 2 (Mrs McFarlane/Mrs Kirk)

- Enter/exit the school site via the Key Stage One playground gate near McColls and queue/enter via the Y2 fire door (following signage), observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 8:45am.

Key worker bubble (Mr Abbott)

- Enter/exit the school site via the main front entrance gate and queue/enter via the main entrance as you have been doing (observing distancing and ground markings). Children will be admitted from 9:00am.

If we are able to accommodate and staff Y6 provision from June 8th, the arrangements will be:

Year 6 bubble 1 (Mrs Carnelly)

- Enter/exit the school site via the Key Stage 2 playground gate and queue/enter via the Y6 classroom fire door (following signage), observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 9:00am.

Year 6 bubble 2 (Mrs Butterfield)

- Enter/exit the school site via the Key Stage 1 playground gate near McColls and queue/enter via the Y4/5 cloakrooms (following signage), observing distancing and ground markings. Children will be admitted from 9.00am.

I stress again that these staffing proposals are provisional and may need to be altered as a result of issues arising in and out of school.

