



21st May 2020

Re Wider reopening of The Firs after half term.

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this update letter finds you and your children safe and well.

Throughout this challenging time, we have tried to offer parents as much information and support as possible and as promised in our letter on the 14th May, I am writing to you today to give you an overview of our provision after half term.

As you know from our previous letter, the Government directive to schools for wider opening has meant us needing to plan to reopen for children in Saplings, reception (Pine) and Y1. This wider reopening will only take place however **if** the government thinks it is safe at that time.

Navigating the way through this situation, within challenging timescales, finding the right solution for our school community, has certainly not been easy. Since the Government's announcement, the senior leadership team and I (regularly liaising with FARM colleagues) have worked to interpret and implement the constantly updating guidance, seeking answers to countless questions, planning actions required and assessing all the risks.

The Firs and the provision we offer is going to look very different for a significant period going forward and your support in these adjustments will be greatly appreciated.

We have decided to welcome YR and Y1 children back into school from **3rd June** and Saplings children will return in the week beginning the **8th June**. (See Timings sheet at the end of this letter)

In this letter, I am trying to give you an overview of our provision in June and over half term, I will be writing to the parents of children in Year R and Year 1 with more details about the provision for the group they will be in, when they return to school. I will be writing to the parents of children in Saplings in the first week back after half term.

Group Structure

1. For the wider opening in June, our provision will be divided into **two** categories:
 - The existing Key Worker / vulnerable pupil provision (a small number of Y2-Y4 children).
 - Provision for **all** YR and Y1 pupils and older Saplings pupils, who will be going into YR (irrespective of what school) in September.

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2. All class groups will be split up into smaller groups of 15 children or less to aid social distancing as much as possible.
 - All Y1, YR and Saplings pupils who were in the Key Worker / vulnerable pupil provision before half term, will join their peers in the new groups we are creating (see below).
 - Maple and Holly children will all be divided into a **Blue** and a **Red** group
 - YR children from Acorns and Conkers will be equally divided into three groups - **Blue**, **Red** and **Green**
 - Saplings children will be divided into four colour groups - **Blue**, **Red**, **Green** and **Purple**
3. Not all children will be with their current class teacher or teaching assistants or in the same classroom as before and we will not be able to take friendships into consideration as we normally would, in the composition of these groups.

Re-organisation of the school day

1. The timings for the return of YR, Y1 and Saplings pupils is set out in the 'Overview of Timings' table at the end of this letter.
2. School will close for all except Key Worker / Vulnerable children at **lunchtime on Wednesdays**. This will be of critical importance to us in helping to provide additional planning time for staff and extra time for additional work the cleaning team is doing.
3. There will be staggered starting and finishing times and the time when your child will need to be dropped off / picked up will be in the 2nd update letter.
4. Break and lunch time play will be staggered / in different locations for different groups. and lunches will either be eaten in the hall or in the classroom the group is based.
5. An adjusted school dinner menu will be provided with packed lunch options only. There will be **further information concerning the menu with the 2nd update letter over half term for YR and Y1 parents**.
6. There will be no gatherings of larger groups of children e.g. for assembly.
7. Due to the difficulties of maintaining the necessary protective measures, including social distancing, Kids' Club will not be opening after half term.
8. There will also be no before and after school clubs run by outside providers.
9. We will be asking children to wear school uniform but there will be more information about this in the 2nd update letter.

Curriculum

1. Curriculum delivery will be different to 'normal' and will cover all the aspects of the 'Home Learning Pack' along with other elements such as phonics, art / craft and PE
2. The curriculum will be adapted considerably with minimal resourcing only to be used.
3. We will prioritise keeping children safe and being sensitive to the emotional impact of the strange times children are living through. For this reason, teaching and learning will also focus on health / hygiene and on social and emotional education.
4. There will be an emphasis on outdoor learning, which will take place at staggered times and in zoned areas of the school site.
5. Classrooms will look very different with minimal furniture and resources.

Social Distancing

1. Obviously, and as you are no doubt aware, social distancing is extremely difficult to aim for with young children. The Government have stated that:

'early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff'.

2. Despite this, we will do everything we can to plan for the maximum amount of social distancing possible in school.
3. A key principle we are adhering to is that children should be organised into groups or 'bubbles' and that these 'bubbles' must remain consistent. Children should not be moving between bubbles and staff should be as consistent as possible.
4. Significant measures will be put into place to promote social distancing including:
 - Children playing with children in the same group or 'bubble' only
 - Children seated apart on tables spaced out around the room
 - Designated toilet facilities for each group.
4. The teacher will socially distance, where possible, and will oversee the activities the children are doing.

Infection Control & Implementing Protective Measures

1. Our infection control will be based on the Government advice and their published 5 approaches to minimising transmission in school settings:
 - i. People with COVID symptoms, or who live with someone with COVID symptoms, do not attend school
 - ii. Frequent hand washing / hand sanitiser
 - iii. Good respiratory hygiene (catch it, bin it, kill it)
 - iv. Frequent cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and equipment
 - v. Minimising contact and mixing between small groups of pupils through environmental changes (eg staggering break and lunch times)
2. Specifically we will:
 - Establish a comprehensive cleaning routine
 - Children will be required to wash their hands regularly throughout the day
 - Parents and visitors will not be allowed on site without a prior appointment and such face to face appointments will be kept to the absolute minimum.
 - Class sizes will be smaller and capped at 15.
 - Pick up and drop off times to be staggered with set entry and exit points.

Home Learning

1. We will continue to provide 'Home Learning' packs for all year groups and this will maintain the provision for children in Y2, Y3 and Y4 that was in operation before half term.
2. This will also enable us to provide 'Home Learning Packs' for any YR or Y1 pupils not attending school.
3. All the teachers who are currently available to work in school will be taking groups of YR, Y1 or key worker children and this will impact on the time available for the implementation of the 'Keeping in Contact' approach, where different focus groups were in contact with teachers each week. I will write to Y2, Y3 and Y4 parents about this after half term.

The decision to come back

I am very aware that some Saplings, YR and Y1 parents will be pleased their child is returning to school and some will have worries and concerns. We really understand this and in line with Government policy, during this period, the school's usual attendance policy (including the use of Penalty Notices) will not be used. If you do send your child back into school from 3rd June though, we would expect consistent attendance please, only being absent for any illness. Thank you.

We are working extremely hard to make the school environment as safe as we possibly can for all the children and staff who will be together after half term and as I said in the previous letter, the Government is very much encouraging parents to send children back to school.

We are also planning specifically to support children with their wellbeing as they reintegrate back to school and have staff on standby to deal with any additional emotional issues that arise.

If, however, you decide that for the time being your child in Saplings, YR or Y1 will **not** be coming back, please **email us** on office@firslower.org for YR and Y1 and the Saplings office on thesaplings@firslower.org to let us know, as for safeguarding reasons, we need to know who we are expecting back on the 3rd June or the day your Saplings child would be coming in to us. Thank you.

Year 2, 3 and 4

The Government has directed that we focus on the youngest children but I wanted to end by saying that we really miss all our children and it is sad that circumstances do not allow us to welcome all the children back to school. We also understand what difficulties this is causing for families, and we are aware of the huge sacrifices that you have already made to care for your children.

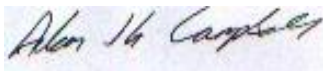
The Government has said that it is their ambition to bring other primary age pupils back before the end of term, although the Government have not shared with us how they think this will be possible. It has taken **all** our available staff and nearly all our classrooms to accommodate the pupils who are returning / remaining with us after half term.

The Local Authority continues to lobby central government to see if bringing Year 4 children into school sooner is possible. Since I last wrote to you a week ago, there have been several virtual meetings between Firs and Alameda staff, and a transition letter and time line is due out to Year 4 parents today.

It looks like our Y2, Y3 and Y4 children will remain at home for the time being and we wish them all well ... you are not forgotten in all our efforts to welcome back the other children!

Take care everyone

Yours sincerely,



Adam JG Campbell

Overview of Timings

Day / Date	Event
May Half Term	<p>All staff in over the week - preparing for wider opening and moving furniture and resources into the new Saplings Building.</p> <p>Update letter 2 to parents of Key Worker/Vulnerable children, YR children and Y1 children.</p>
Monday 1st June	<p>School open to Key Worker / Vulnerable Children only</p> <p>Update letter 2 to parents of Saplings children.</p> <p>Email out to parents re Google form for requests for Home Learning Packs</p> <p>All staff in - training, planning and classroom preparation</p>
Tuesday 2nd June	<p>School open to Key Worker / Vulnerable Children only</p> <p>All staff in - Final preparations, final check of risk assessment and associated planning document, to see that all tasks have been undertaken.</p>
Wednesday 3rd June *This will happen every Wednesday until the end of term. Times to follow in update letter 2	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>Children in YR and children in Y1 attend for the first time for induction session - am only</p> <p>School closes to children in YR and Y1 at lunchtime*</p> <p>Pm - All staff conducting planning and preparation activities and additional cleaning time</p>
Thursday 4th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open all day for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>Keeping In Touch letter to all parents</p>
Friday 5th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open all day for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>Home Learning Packs will be available outside school</p>

Monday 8th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open all day for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>School open for Saplings Blue and Green Groups - (In Saplings or Hollows)</p> <p>Email out to parents re Google form for requests for Home Learning Packs</p>
Tuesday 9th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open all day for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>School open for Saplings Blue and Green Groups - (In Saplings or Hollows)</p>
Wednesday 10th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open am for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>YR and Y1 children go home at lunchtime.</p> <p>School closed for Saplings - cleaning and planning time for staff</p>
Thursday 11th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>School open for Saplings Red and Purple Groups - (In Saplings or Hollows building)</p> <p>Keeping In Touch letter to all parents</p>
Friday 12th June	<p>School open all day for Key Worker / Vulnerable Children</p> <p>School open for YR and Y1 Children</p> <p>Home Learning Packs will be available outside school</p> <p>School open for Saplings Red and Purple Groups - (In Saplings or Hollows building)</p>

Notes:

- This table sets out all the key developments as they take place each day.
- It ends with the 12th June, as from here, all the pattern of the new working week has been demonstrated and the timings will then repeat until the end of term.
- Where there are any new developments of course, we will keep you informed about them.