



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Venerable Bede Church of England Academy

Dayspring Trust

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DAI/TCG

26 August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Ahead of school opening in September to welcome all our pupils back into school, I thought that it would be sensible to share the changes which we have implemented to ensure that pupils and staff are safe and cared for. First, a copy of the school risk assessment has been sent out to all stakeholders on behalf of the directors of Dayspring Trust. I would recommend that you read this document so that you can get an understanding of the level of interventions which have been taken to ensure the safety of everyone. You can access a copy of the risk assessment file by clicking the link here [VBCEA Risk Assessment](#). The risk assessment is a fluid document, in that it will change as the advice from other partner agencies changes. Equally, individual risk assessments may need to be done for pupils with additional needs. You know your child the best, if you feel that there is something which you need to share school, please contact us using the contact us form available on the school website ([click here to go to contact form](#)).

When deciding how to bring our pupils back to school safely, we have taken into consideration all of the advice available from Central Government, SAGE, the World Health Organisation as well as our Teacher unions and Local Education Authority. If this advice changes, then we will implement the changes as they apply to us in school. At each step throughout this process, our main priority has been the welfare and safety of our pupils, staff and visitors to school.

The main issue facing secondary schools has been how to bring back to school a significant number of pupils at the same time. Unlike primary schools, we cannot keep pupils in a single class with a single teacher; this is simply not how secondary education works. Current advice from central government has outlined to school leaders that we should ensure each year group is kept in a “**mega bubble**”. Pupils are allowed to mix within their mega bubble, although we must keep bubbles apart as far as possible within school.

So that mega bubbles are kept apart as much as possible we have implemented a range of adaptations to both the physical environment, as well as how pupils, staff and other stakeholders must most act and behave whilst they are in school and on their way to and from school. We are all in this together, and we must all play our part to ensure our own and other people's safety. We have updated our policy on behaviour to reflect the current situation.

We decided early on that **staggered start times** for each year group **would not fit our school**. We wanted to support parents who have pupils in different year groups, as well as parents who may have younger children attending other the schools. Once we are back to full time education, all pupils will start school each day at 8.30 a.m. as is currently the situation. Our pupils will be late if they arrive to school after 8.40 a.m. We will finish school at the same time – 3.00 p.m. At VBCEA there is enough outdoor space to make sure that each year group has its own designated area where they will gather each morning prior to the start of school. Staff will be posted in these areas to ensure that year groups are well apart from each other. Pupils will be directed to these areas as they return to school next week. Pupils should maintain a minimum of 1m plus away from others until they are in their mega bubble.

We will need to rely on pupil's and parent's common sense on their way to and from school. Pupils will need to make sure that they maintain an appropriate distance from each other, especially if they are travelling with other pupils from different year groups. So that we can reduce the number of people on school site, we would ask everyone to support us by not congregating at the entrance to school each day (parents and pupils). Equally, parents who drop their children off, should always remain in their vehicles.

We are asking that parents do not make unannounced visits to school with the expectation that they can speak to staff. This is to reduce the risk to all by minimising the number of people in the building at any one time. If you do need to speak to any member of staff face to face, this will be arranged on an appointment basis. Please understand that we have a limited number of offices in which to see visitors, and that we will need time to clean down each space every time it is used.

From the start of term, pupils will be accompanied into the school building with their form tutor each day and make their way straight to their form group. We have decided that pupils will **not be able to access their lockers** at the minute. The reasons for this are that it will reduce pupil contact and make sure that pupils from different year groups are not mixing, whilst also reducing the number of surfaces which pupils are touching each day. This will mean that pupils will need to bring a sturdy bag to carry all of their belongings. Pupils will need to bring in their own equipment to school. We recommend a plastic clear pencil case because it is easier to clean as required. Pupils should have all standard equipment as outlined on the school website ([equipment list link](#)). When pupils arrive at their form room, they will **sanitise their hands immediately upon entry**, ensuring that they are all safe.

All pupils and staff will follow a one-way system around school from when they enter the building. We will be training pupils when they return on this system; we have directional markers showing the route around school. As pupils are all moving in the same direction, it will ensure that they are able to maintain the minimum distance of 1m plus from different year groups / bubbles. Currently pupils will not need to wear face coverings in school. In the event of a local lockdown, we will follow the guidance which is in place at that time. In those circumstances, it would be mandatory for pupils to wear a face coverings in corridors ([link to current DFE guidance on face masks in schools](#)).

Once in school, pupils will have their **full curriculum** each day – that is their usual 5 lessons. They will be issued a new timetable as is our usual practice when they return. We will all need to get used to the new additional practices which we are implementing each day to keep ourselves safe. We will be working with our pupils to ensure that they take control of their own, and others' safety. At the **start of each lesson**, pupils will **sanitise** their hands immediately on entry to the classroom. They will have a designated seat which they will sit in, according to the teacher's seating plan. Before any work is started, pupils will **sanitise their own workspace** using the materials provided. We hope that this will reinforce to all pupils the need to be safe; it will also give them the responsibility to take control. During lessons, all staff will have appropriate PPE, which includes a face mask, so that they can support individual pupils where there might be a need to be less than 2m away. In this way our staff will be protected, and so will our pupils.

In order to maintain each year groups separation in their "mega bubble", we have decided to implement a **staggered break, and a staggered lunch**. During break, there will be 3 year groups outside in their designated area on break one, and two during break 2. Staff will escort pupils out for break and escort them back to class at the end. We will have **3 lunch sittings** with a maximum of two year groups on lunch at any one time. Each year group will be designated to stay in either the hall or the bistro for lunch. Previously lunch break was 45 minutes to feed 5 year groups. We have **doubled this time** to an hour and a half so that we can make sure that each area is cleaned and ready between sittings. Pupils will **sanitise on entry** to the dining areas, and will be able to **sanitise during lunch** as appropriate; cleaning materials will be provided. Y7 will have their own sitting so that they can get used to the lunch process which is different in secondary school. As I am sure you will appreciate, we need to implement a **reduced menu** at lunchtime; there will be a hot main meal and a hot vegetarian option, panini's, pasta king with toppings, cold individual sandwiches, drinks and dessert. We intend to open our **free breakfast club** from the second week of term – that is w/c 7/09/20. Pupils who use this provision will be able to maintain a distance of 2m plus in line with government guidelines, or be with friends from their same year group as they are part of the same mega bubble.

In the first few weeks of school, we **do not intend to run any after school clubs or activities**. These activities often mean mixing bubbles of pupils from different year groups, and currently this is not an option to us. We will be assessing whether afterschool clubs can be opened up with appropriate social distancing in place, and if they can, we will inform you of this.

As you will see from national media and Government documentation, attendance at school from September is mandatory for all pupils; we all agree that good attendance to school is essential. However, we need to ensure that should any pupil, or staff member, show symptoms of infection by corona virus they follow the up to date

guidance. Currently, this would be to use the “**Test and Trace**” system introduced. School should be notified of any pupil who is absent because of either a confirmed or suspected infection. We will then follow national guidance as part of the test and trace process. Pupils would remain at home until the outcome of the test **returned a negative result**, or they had recovered from the infection spending a **minimum of 10 days** in isolation. . If a **pupil becomes ill with corona virus symptoms during school time**, they will be **isolated and parents / carers contacted** so that the pupil can be picked up as soon as possible. The pupil should then be tested using NHS test and trace. Until the result of this test is known, the pupil should remain at home. Online work will be set as soon as practicable so that the pupils education can continue.

We have created a number of videos to illustrate the changes discussed in this letter. Please check out the link from the homepage of the school website ([click here for video link](#)). We would encourage each pupil to watch these videos before term starts so that they can familiarise themselves with the current situation is.

I would like to share with you that Mrs Birtwistle (Head of Year) will be on adoption leave for the academic year 2020/2021. We wish her, and all of her family, all the best as they embark on this exciting journey together. Her role as Head of Year, looking after Y9, will be undertaken by Mrs R. Scott for this next academic year.

Finally, we would all like to get school back to “normal” as quickly as possible. There are some things which will be different, and we will need to adapt. We need to understand that at this moment in time things are not what we are used to. We are all doing the very best that we can in a difficult situation, at home as well as at school. If you have queries, questions or comments regarding the full opening of school, please feel that you can contact us. If your question is non-urgent, we would appreciate it if you would use the “contact us” form available on the school website ([link to contact us form](#)). Your help in this is essential!

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Airey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Mr D Airey
Headteacher