



SEVENOAKS

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents

I hope you are all well.

Please forgive the rather lengthy nature of this letter but as I am sure you will appreciate, there is much to communicate at this time. In order to make it more “user friendly” there is a navigation table below that will enable you to jump to the sections that you feel are most relevant:

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INTRODUCTION

I am writing to provide more information regarding the phased reopening of schools “from” 1st June 2020 at the earliest. This announcement has, understandably, raised many questions and concerns amongst parents, teachers and governors about the feasibility and desirability of this happening at Sevenoaks Prep and also exactly when it might happen. Whilst we are all eager to return to some kind of normality, there are extremely important issues and decisions that need to be made and taken for the right reasons. Our top priority at The Prep will always be to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of your children. To reopen safely and confidently, at the right time for our pupils and staff, is more important than responding quickly to a Government plan and date. We are also very mindful that this is an ever-evolving situation, and that the advice we are using to formulate our current plans may well change in the future, which will clearly have an impact on what we have outlined below.

We are keen to offer every possible assistance to our parents, many of whom are now required to return to work and so The Prep’s Governors and Senior Management Team have been analysing advice and information issued by the Government and the many key stakeholders in our sector: the Department for Education (DfE), the Independent Schools’ Council (ISC) and the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools (IAPS), in order to reach a decision on what is desirable for our pupils and staff, helpful for our parents, respectful of Government guidelines and also feasible from an operational perspective.

It is important to state that the school the children come back to after half term will not be the same as the school they left in March, and there will inevitably be decisions that we have had to make in terms of curriculum, accommodation, routine and staffing in order to provide the most appropriate experience we can for our pupils at this time. Another important consideration has been the structure that needs to be in place for the children in Year groups not returning to school and those children who have the opportunity to return to school but who take the decision not to do so. It is important to state from the outset that all the decisions that the School has made have been taken with the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff as the primary influencer.

Our plans to reopen have been thoroughly risk assessed to minimise the likelihood of cross contamination as much as is feasibly and practically possible. However, we would like to highlight that in these unprecedented times, and in the absence of a vaccine, our plans can only minimise the risk to a point. Therefore, any final decision about allowing your child to attend school must rest with you and your family. Any parent who chooses not to send their child into school will be supported and the children will be able to continue with their online learning at home.

In order to enable a partial reopening that will be as safe as possible under the circumstances, we will be implementing a phased return for the year groups as outlined in the paragraphs below.

STAFF INSET

With more than 100 children returning to Pre-Prep, additional preparation time is required to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place for them all to return safely on site. Therefore, Monday 1st June and Tuesday 2nd June will be INSET days for all returning Pre-Prep staff; returning Prep staff working with Year 6 will have one day of INSET on Monday 1st June.

KEY WORKER CHILDREN

From Tuesday 2nd June, children of key workers will be based in the Year 5 classrooms rather than The Centenary Centre. They will have their own designated play area (“zone”) and also have exclusive use of the washrooms in The Hall. If you have been making use of the key worker provision and your child’s Year group is one of those returning to school, then your child will be placed with their Year group rather than with other key worker children.

NURSERY

For the present time, we will continue with the home learning provision for these children with the aim being to reopen Nursery from 15th June. It is important to consider both the safety and welfare of the pupils and staff at this point following a period of absence of seven weeks; in allowing this gentle phased return, we will be able to thoroughly risk assess the traffic and footfall around the School with the numbers of children who will return and be in a better place to assess the safety of bringing these youngest children back. We are mindful that our youngest learners will find returning to school the most challenging given that the setup at The Prep will not be the one that they left in March; we are aware they may find it incredibly challenging to separate from their parents and we want to ensure that we have adequate staffing available to make their transition back to school a happy and positive one. In relieving the pressure of this Year group returning on the same day as all other pupils from Kindergarten, Reception and Year 1, we can ensure their happiness and safety is prioritised with a low pupil to staff ratio. This will also ensure that we can make the site as safe as possible for these learners. Children below three require a greater adult-to-pupil ratio and the logistics for ensuring these children remain in groups is far more complicated than those in older year groups, as we are certain you will appreciate.

In making this consideration, we have followed Government guidelines highlighting key transition years being prioritised. Kindergarten children will make a key transition in September from part-time education to full time, compulsory school in Reception and we have therefore taken the decision to prioritise this year group.

KINDERGARTEN, RECEPTION & YEAR 1

We will reopen for these Year groups on Wednesday 3rd June 2020. Children will be in groups (the children will know these as “bubbles”) of no more than 15. Each group will be made up of children from the same Year. They will not mix with other groups and will stay in the same group with the same adult. The Government guidelines are very clear and state that class sizes must be smaller, and that both teachers and teaching assistants may run a small group of children. This means that your child may be taught by either their class teacher or a teaching assistant, the latter of whom will be directed by the teacher in that Year group.

In Kindergarten, we will operate a phased return beginning with morning sessions only. This will allow for a thorough clean of the classroom areas for these children each day once they have left the site. As these are the youngest children, the equipment will need sterilising and additional cleaning will be required daily. The timings reflect these requirements, alongside the need to allow staff time for planning the online learning offer which will continue for all families. This will mean that families will receive sessions in school alongside online learning resources which are proportionate to the number of sessions which a child is down to attend. For example, if a child usually attends for 8 sessions per week, they would be allocated 5 sessions in school and provided with online learning for an additional 3 sessions.

The additional staffing and risks associated with feeding young children are too high with the current guidelines and advice. Children of this young age need support and help when eating and this will make it incredibly difficult for us to protect both staff and children with appropriate safe distancing. Therefore, for the moment we will not be offering a lunch service for Kindergarten children. We will continue to review and monitor this over the coming weeks and if we believe that we can safely accommodate children over a lunch period then we will do so.

Pre-Prep will close on Fridays each week at 1.00pm to facilitate necessary planning time for teachers, who will continue to not only work in school but provide online learning too, as well as allowing for additional cleaning at the end of a week. It is important to note that the Government have stressed children may return safely provided that the School follows strict and timely cleaning measures to minimise the risk of infection; we believe the additional time allocated to this on a Friday will support these measures and, crucially, further minimise risk to our community.

Children will play in their allocated groups at playtimes and lunchtimes, which will be in specified zones on the playground and within the grounds. There will be no assemblies within the Pre-Prep Hall, but Mrs Cook will provide an assembly which can be watched in the classrooms via an interactive board. Each group of children will have individual play equipment for playtimes that will not be shared with other groups and which will be wiped clean each time after use.

Children will use designated washrooms for their groups and will not be allowed to use different facilities throughout the day.

In order to limit the kit that will need to be brought into school, and therefore minimise the risks associated with this, the children will not need to bring in their book bags. However, we ask that children bring in a named water bottle each day and a snack for morning break. (The School will be unable to provide snacks as usual, so please ensure that your child brings their own.) We will operate a no uniform policy in Pre-Prep for the remainder of this term so children should wear their own clothes to school each day. We believe this will be more practical for parents and children during these times as all clothes must be washed daily after they have been at school. (Not all children may have access to enough school PE kit to make the daily wearing and washing of it practical.)

We are aware that some Kindergarten children attend other settings. As you can imagine, this poses a problem for educational establishments in terms of limiting the risk of cross-contamination should children attend two settings during the course of a week. We would therefore ask, following guidance from IAPS, that if your child is returning to school from 2nd June that they do not attend any other setting.

YEAR 6

Year 6 will reopen on Tuesday 2nd June. Pupils will be based in The Centenary Centre and split into three working groups (the pupils will know these as “pods”), benefiting from the versatility of the building which allows us to open up the two languages rooms for Pod A, the English Room for the smaller Pod B and the two maths rooms for Pod C. Final details of these groupings will be published once we have confirmation of the number of pupils attending.

Access to The Centenary Centre will be through the fire exit door at the back of each group’s allocated classroom to minimise traffic in the internal corridors. They will be allocated a set desk in their set classroom where they will keep their equipment to avoid any potential cross contamination. With this in mind, we ask that pupils ensure that they have the following equipment with them each day:

- pencil case with pens, pencils, rubber, sharpener, colouring pencils, ruler, geometry set, calculator, 2 reading books / Kindle
- a water bottle and healthy snack (please note that the water fountains will be out of use)

We ask that pupils bring in their equipment in their school rucksack, which should be taken home each day and cleaned. Pupils should not bring any other equipment other than that stated above, including sporting equipment (e.g. cricket bats, tennis racquets or footballs) or any other games. Pupils should wear their SPS PE or games kit (no cricket whites) to school every day so as to avoid the need to change during the day.

Year 6 pupils will be the sole users of the washrooms in The Centenary Centre.

Government guidance states that the number of staff allocated to pupils each day should be kept to a minimum but that classes taught by subject specialists as opposed to class teachers may need to adapt as necessary; therefore, in order to adhere to this, there will be three members of staff on site each day - one for each of group - along with an additional member of the Senior Management Team. Pupils will continue to follow the detailed online provision set by teachers through the online learning platforms while they are in school and will be supported by their allocated teacher throughout the day. We have organised a rota of staff on site on each day based on their area of expertise so that there will be a teacher of English or humanities, maths or sciences, and modern foreign languages to ensure that pupils continue to be given the support they need. Pupils will follow a set timetable, which we will encourage those pupils studying from home to follow; all Year 6 pupils will still be able to access online support from their subject specialist teachers via *Microsoft Teams* and *Google Meet*, albeit at slightly different times to before half term. This will allow for those pupils who are unable to attend school to have access to the same level of support as those that do. (Timetables will be sent to you on Tuesday 26th May.)

In order to maximise the amount of social interaction with their peers, particularly for those who are unable to attend school, we will run a *Google Meet* session for Form Period from 8.30 - 9.00am, as well at break time and lunch time.

Year 6 iPads:

Pupils will be provided with a school iPad and keyboard which they will be responsible for over the course of the rest of term. We have a limited number of headsets available and so would ask that if possible pupils bring with them headphones/headsets with a microphone feature and either standard 3.5mm jack connector, Apple lightning connector or Bluetooth. They will take this iPad home with them so that work can be completed at home if necessary. It is essential that they bring their allocated iPad, keyboard and their headphones/headsets to school with them each day in order to be able to complete their work. Further details regarding the use, charging and care of iPads will be emailed to you by the IT Department.

YEARS 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8

As matters stand, the Government's guidance is that these Year groups will not be returning to school at the present time. We appreciate this is frustrating for many, including those pupils transitioning to their senior schools or preparing for entrance tests. The advice we have received from IAPS and insurers, in line with Government guidelines, is that we cannot allow these Year groups to return even though we are an independent school. The Government have indicated a wish for all primary-aged pupils to return to school at some point this term, and once we have clarity on how and when this will happen we will make every effort to accommodate these pupils. As secondary-aged pupils, Government plans for Years 7 and 8 may be different and we will update you as and when we receive guidance.

ATTENDANCE

In order for us to plan effectively for the children returning to school, we would ask that parents of children in Kindergarten, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 confirm their child's attendance from 2nd June by 4.00pm on Tuesday 26th May so that we have time to finalise groupings, staffing and logistics.

- Kindergarten, Reception and Year 1 - sarah.howe@theprep.org.uk
- Year 6 - louise.enderby@theprep.org.uk

If you do not register by this time your child will be unable to return to school on 2nd/3rd June as the groupings for that week will have been set. If you wish for your child to return to school sometime after the 2nd/3rd June, we ask that you give us five working days' notice so that we can make the necessary alterations to accommodate your child.

We ask that all children (apart from Kindergarten) returning to school do so on a full time basis, attending Monday to Friday in line with the timings set out below.

Parents of children in Nursery will be contacted separately with regards to returning to school arrangements.

CAR PARK – collection, drop off and siblings

In order to minimise footfall on site, parents will not be allowed to accompany their child into the school grounds. Therefore, the use of “Drop & Go” and “Collect & Go” will be compulsory; this will be signposted for families and there will be a short video explaining how to use this system available for families to watch very soon.

Year groups will have a staggered drop off and collection each day to facilitate safe social distancing across the school. The timings for each class are detailed below:

KINDERGARTEN	Drop Off	Lunch	Collection
Monday	8:20 - 8:30am	n/a	12:30pm
Tuesday	8:20 - 8:30am	n/a	12:30pm
Wednesday	8:20 - 8:30am	n/a	12:30pm
Thursday	8:20 - 8:30am	n/a	12:30pm
Friday	8:20 - 8:30am	n/a	12:30pm

RECEPTION	Drop Off	Lunch	Collection
Monday	9.00 - 9:15am	11:50 - 12:50pm	3:00pm
Tuesday	9.00 - 9:15am	11:50 - 12:50pm	3:00pm
Wednesday	9.00 - 9:15am	11:50 - 12:50pm	3:00pm
Thursday	9.00 - 9:15am	11:50 - 12:50pm	3:00pm
Friday	9:00 - 9:15am	11:50 - 12:50pm	1:00pm

YEAR 1	Drop Off	Lunch	Collection
Monday	8:45 - 9:00am	12:30 - 1:40pm	3.15pm
Tuesday	8:45 - 9:00am	12:30 - 1:40pm	3.15pm
Wednesday	8:45 - 9:00am	12:30 - 1:40pm	3.15pm
Thursday	8:45 - 9:00am	12:30 - 1:40pm	3.15pm
Friday	8:45 - 9:00am	12:30 - 1:00pm	1:00pm

YEAR 6	Drop Off	Lunch	Collection
Monday	8:30 - 8:45am	1:00 - 1:55pm	4.00 - 4.15pm
Tuesday	8:30 - 8:45am	1:00 - 1:55pm	4.00 - 4.15pm
Wednesday	8:30 - 8:45am	1:00 - 1:55pm	4.00 - 4.15pm
Thursday	8:30 - 8:45am	1:00 - 1:55pm	4.00 - 4.15pm
Friday	8:30 - 8:45am	1:00 - 1:55pm	4.00 - 4.15pm

Pre-Prep pupils should be dropped off at the usual “Drop & Go” spot. Essentially, it will operate in the usual manner but we must ask that all parents remain in the car where possible. We understand that children in Kindergarten may need parents to get them out of the car, but if your child can do this independently we ask that they do so.

Once out of the car, children will be asked to line up on the markers which will be placed 2m apart.

Pupils in Year 6 should be dropped off by the Main House between 8.30 and 8.45am where they will be met by the member of staff on duty. (As with Pre-Prep, we ask that parents remain in their cars.) Pupils should then report directly to the fire exit door at the back of their allocated classroom in The Centenary Centre.

Pre-Prep pupils should be collected from the designated "Drop & Go" area. Pupils in Year 6 should be collected from the outside the main house where a member of staff will be on duty. We ask that you remain in your cars and once we see you we will then deliver your child to your car. Please do not get out of the car, unless you need to help your child to buckle up.

Where there are families who have children in different Year groups, we ask that they make use of the drop off and collection timings of the youngest sibling. If you have a child in Pre-Prep and Year 6, please collect your youngest child first from the Pre-Prep collection zone and then drive round to the main house to collect your eldest child who will be waiting for you with a member of staff.

CATERING

The Oakery kitchen will be open and prepare meals for both Prep and Pre-Prep children. The catering team will be responsible for maintaining the hygiene of the kitchen and will also follow social distancing guidelines. A revised menu (details of which will be available shortly) will be in place to allow us to maintain social distancing; meals will be delivered to each group of children to eat in their allocated classrooms once they have washed their hands. If the weather is fine, the children will eat outside but remain in their allocated groups. Our caterers, *Accent*, will provide ecologically-friendly disposable cutlery and boxes. (Pre-Prep children will receive lunch on a Friday before going home.) Please be assured that allergies will be catered for as usual.

CLEANING

Our cleaners will complete a deep clean of the site before the children return, and we will be using virucidal cleaning during the day to minimise transmission before each room is fully cleaned in the evening. There will be increased use of the hand sanitiser liquid in the classrooms as well as strict regular handwashing rules.

CLUBS AND WRAPAROUND CARE

All wraparound care facilities and clubs (e.g. sporting activities, Breakfast Club, Little Oaks, Prep, Late Stay etc.) will not be running during this time as our risk assessment shows that we are unable to safely manage these sessions currently under the guidance.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

The School has produced a risk assessment which aims to minimise the risk of spreading Covid-19. We will have in place a strict regime of staff and pupil training and classroom practice in order to keep health and safety at the forefront of the minds of those on site.

Our school nurse, Tahnee Brown, will be on site Tuesdays to Fridays and will be based in the Pre-Prep. On Mondays, our Level 3-trained first aiders will be on site and will have received specific training from Nurse Tahnee prior to the children returning after half term.

There are clear procedures in place which we will follow should anyone on site, child or adult, develop symptoms of Covid-19.

Further details of our medical policies and procedures can be found on the School's website by clicking on this [hyperlink](#).

PARENT / STAFF COMMUNICATION

In order to minimise footfall on the site and to prevent cross-contamination, communication between parents and staff will need to continue online or via telephone.

PPE

As children will stay within their own groups, Government guidance states that they do not require PPE. However, we shall be making this available to our staff and be fully supportive of them should they wish to wear it. (PPE may include gloves, masks, visors and aprons.) Staff will wear PPE when they are attending to a child for medical reasons

and first aid, or when children changing children due to 'accidents'. We will be training staff on the correct use of PPE during the INSET day on Monday 1st June.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

In order for us to allow the community back on site we have produced specific assessments tailored to reduce the risks in all possible areas. This has been done through a combination of our usual external health and safety specialist, Government advice, Department for Education guidelines and the School's Health and Safety Committee.

The risk assessments have been scrutinised by the Governors and passed, and have been used in the creation of all other aspects of the new school day, including rules and procedures, drop offs and how we handle cases of infection.

We have also incorporated the current dynamic risk assessment we have been using and updating with the key worker children, and the dynamic safeguarding risk assessment which covers on-site and off-site education.

The risk assessments are reviewed in line with new documentation being produced by professional bodies and weekly in Senior Management Team meetings to ensure that the health and safety of the community are at the forefront of all decisions being made.

Details of the School's risk assessments can be found by clicking on this [hyperlink](#).

SOCIAL DISTANCING

We will go over the new school rules with the children in an age appropriate way to highlight the risks and the reasons we are social distancing. We are sure you will appreciate that social distancing for young children will be extremely challenging. Although we will endeavour to keep them at separate desks in the classrooms, when they are playing children will naturally look to move towards each other. Even though areas will be zoned, there is a possibility that children will have contact with others within their group when they are playing.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Prime Minister was clear that plans to reopen schools were conditional on numerous criteria. Therefore, whilst we have done our best to plan for what we know, we are also aware that we will have to adapt at any time and therefore any of the plans and provisions we have put in place are subject to alteration as the Government's direction to schools evolves.

I do hope that our plans reassure you that the safety and welfare of all our pupils is our priority and we have minimised the risks as much as possible.

Thank you for your ongoing support at this difficult time for us all.

Best wishes and take care

