27th May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers of a child in Year 1 or Foundation Stage (**Blackbird Class Bubble –** half of Owl Class),

**A huge thank you**

Firstly, since the 23rd March you have been providing your child with home learning due to the unprecedented closure of schools across England due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Thank you for the enormous amount of support, energy, patience and the great spirit you have shown. We are under no illusion how demanding this will have been for many of our families and children, and we have really appreciated the teamwork between us to all work together in very challenging circumstances – thank you!

**Information about wider opening from 1st June 2020 (assuming school reopens to FS and Y1 as the government plans)**

As you will know, the government **hopes** to allow schools to welcome back children in Reception (Foundation Stage – Doves, Swans and Swifts) and in Year 1 (Owls, Wrens and Puffins) from 1st June. This means that children will, in effect, go back to school.

As you know, a key government strategy is the requirement to create exclusive ‘bubbles’ that children do not move in and out of as I described in my letter to all parents last week. To get a full picture of school from 1st June, please read this letter in conjunction with ‘Keeping in touch – 8’ sent out on 21st May.

We know that this will be an agonising decision for some of you, and, as I have said previously, there is no right answer. To make this less pressurised we have promised to continue providing the home learning packs for Y1 and FS, as before on the website weekly. The government has said that only parents of clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable children need to consider keeping their children away from school for safety reasons. Please let us know (via telephone or email – contacts below) if you are not sending your child back to school for this reason. Alternatively, you may have decided you feel it is safer for your child to remain at home. If this is the case, then **please also let us know that you will not be returning your child to school (via telephone or email – contacts below). This will prevent us making a lot of ‘absence’ calls on Monday** as we must treat all non-attendance as absence until you tell us otherwise. If you begin by keeping your child off school, but then change your mind, that is fine. Please just let us know, and we will be delighted to welcome your child back at any time. As I said in my previous letter, we just would request consistent attendance with your child being either ‘at school’ or ‘not at school’ not a mixture of both. Thank you.

As you are aware, a key principle of the government’s method is that ‘bubbles’ must remain consistent. Children should not be moving between bubbles and staff should be as consistent as possible. This requirement will mean that, unfortunately, we will be unable to move children into our Y2, 3 and 4 Key Worker bubbles on a Friday afternoon when school closes for Foundation Stage and Year 1 children. **Even if you are a Key Worker in Foundation Stage or Year 1, we are sorry, but we do require you to also collect your child(ren) after lunch on a Friday at the time indicated below.**

With FS and Year 1 children back in school in ‘bubbles’ of no more than 15, we are using twice the amount of space and staff as usual. Therefore 12 out of 15 classrooms are already fully utilised. This leaves us 3 classes for Key Worker provision (Year 2, 3 and 4), each can take a maximum of 15 children. In effect, school is ‘full’ again but with fewer children in each class.

New government guidance (as described in last week’s letter) comes in from the 1st of June, so we will be making some changes as there will now be up to 225 children (and parents etc.) back on the school site. This will be necessary to comply with the new guidance and I apologise, but these changes are unavoidable.

**What are the changes and key points from the 1st June?**

* Children will be in ‘group bubbles’ in allocated classrooms with consistent adults. This may change where you need to drop off and collect your child(ren). Please see below
* We have had to stagger the start and finish times of the day to avoid groups of children and parents forming. This will possibly change the time you need to drop off and collect your child(ren). Please see below
* School will close after lunch on Fridays to allow staff to clean resources, the classrooms and complete planning and communication responsibilities
* We request that the children attend in school uniform rather, and that children have freshly washed clothes on each day to reduce the risk of infection still further. This is in line with government guidance
* Your child will only need the following things with them on a daily basis: a coat (if required), a hat (if required), sun cream (if required), a named water bottle filled with water, a healthy snack and a home packed lunch (if not having a school dinner)
* We will continue providing a choice of school dinner (school packed lunch or hot jacket potato with a variety of fillings), including a pudding, or children can bring in their own packed lunch on a daily basis. As before, these school meals will be charged for using Parent Pay, if you normally pay for them and can be ordered on a daily basis each morning by your child in class
* Your child will need their normal PE kit to be brought in on the first day and left in school for use all half term. We will avoid sending it back and forth between home and school to avoid cross-infection
* Your child will not be required to bring their reading book and diary into school (for the same reason). We will provide children with a reading book for their sole use. When books are exchanged in school, they will be left for at least 3 days to ensure any book given to your child is ‘clean’. Please do carry on reading with your child for about 10 minutes every day at home. This is still essential to their learning and development
* Children will be expected to respect not only the usual school rules, but also the rules around handwashing, personal hygiene, social distancing, staying in specified zones etc. We know almost all children will be fully respectful, but will ensure that any child who does not respect the rules will be isolated and sent home. It simply isn’t fair, or safe, for other children, staff and families.
* If your child is showing any symptoms of Covid 19 at all (temperature, new, continuous cough, loss of taste and/or smell) **please do not send them into school.** All children over the age of 5 are entitled to be tested now, so we would ask you do this and inform us of the results at your earliest convenience. If your child begins to display any symptoms at school, or feels unwell in any way, we will isolate them in the medical room and then send the children home as a precaution, and to protect others. If we have a confirmed case of Covid 19 in your child’s bubble, or in school, we will inform you as the remainder of the bubble will need to self-isolate for 14 days, in line with PHE guidance. In addition, we may need to close down part, or all, of the school and carry out deep cleaning. At all times we will be following DfE and PHE (Public Health England advice)
* If we have significant numbers of staff who display any symptoms at all, they will also have to stay away from school. This may mean that we have to ‘close’ a bubble for a number of days. This may be at very short notice and we apologise in advance should this ever be the case

We are acutely aware that this will be a worrying and stressful time for everyone. We will do everything we can to support the children at this time of change. We are 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. For example, our Pastoral Support team will be available, each class will have daily mindfulness and a PSHRE (Personal, Social, Health and Relationships Education)/Circle Time ‘types’ of lesson, there will be ‘emotion cards’ through which children can show adults how they are feeling through the day and there will be a ‘worry box’ too. Lessons will be shorter with frequent breaks and built in rewards to ensure their bubbles are happy and positive. Mornings will focus more on Maths, phonics/spelling and English, with the afternoons including activities around Science, history, art, PE, music etc. We will make sure there is plenty of fun and games too! In addition, each teacher is videoing a short **‘Welcome Back!’ message** to the children. On Friday 29th May, these will be available to view on the website. Go to the Kids Area, Bubble Welcome Videos and click on your bubble name. This will help children ‘see’ who their teacher is in advance, in case they are unfamiliar with them.

**What can I do to help?**

* Get your child back into a good sleep routine if they are out of it
* Make sure your child has what they need for the day (see above)
* Make sure you are familiar with start times/finish times, routes into school etc. (detailed below) and stick to these please. Remember school will close after lunch on a Friday.
* Be really punctual – not arriving either early or late. This will enable the best social distancing opportunities between adults arriving/leaving the site
* Only send one adult into school to drop off/collect children
* Not linger on site to chat to other parents or play on equipment. The equipment will have been cleaned ready for the next day and this could contaminate it again. Please leave the site immediately
* Do not try to speak with the teachers at drop off or collection times as this will cause delays and social distancing issues. Please call the school office (01525 755664) or email in instead (either office@ or class@ email addresses). We can pass messages on quickly
* Some queuing will be inevitable; please observe the 2m rule of social distancing
* Go through the ‘advice for parents on return’ leaflets attached with this letter
* Complete and return the RAG rating questionnaire ‘How closure affected us’ sent with this letter. This is not compulsory, but will help us understand and meet the needs of your child and family.

**Answers to key questions**

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| **What bubble am I in?** | Blackbird Class Bubble |
| **Who else is with me?** | Half of Owl Class |
| **What teacher(s) will I have?** | Mr Syrett and Mrs Curran |
| **What classroom am I in?** | Blackbird Classroom |
| **What gate should we come into school through?** | KS2 field gate (A&F Motors end of Queens Road) |
| **What gate should I leave school via?** | KS2 field gate |
| **Where should I meet my teacher to be dropped off and collected?** | Blackbird external classroom door at the top end of the KS2 playground, middle classroom door, in front of you, as you walk up |
| **What time should I be dropped off?** | 8:40am |
| **What time should I be picked up?** | 3:10pm  (1:00pm on a Friday) |
| **What if I have siblings in different bubbles that need collecting and dropping off at different times?** | Please drop both children off at your earliest time, at their respective drop-off points. Please collect both children at the earliest child’s time from their respective collection points. |
| **How can my grown-ups contact my teacher directly?**  **How else can they get in touch?** | blackbirdclass@russell-lower.co.uk  [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)  01525 755664 |
| **What should I bring every day?** | A coat (if required)  A hat (if required)  Sun cream (if required)  A named water bottle filled with water A healthy snack  A home packed lunch (if not having a school dinner)  PE kit (first day only) |
| **What should I leave at home?** | Reading books  Reading diary  Any other bags |
| **What should I wear?** | A clean, normal school uniform |

**Further questions?**

We are aware that we have sent out a great deal of very detailed information over the last few days and you may well be feeling overwhelmed. You wouldn’t be alone! Even though we have tried to cover everything, we are aware we may have forgotten something or missed an opportunity to clarify an arrangement. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have a question or query, but please be aware that planning this has been incredibly complex and we are unable to make further changes/swaps/adjustments to start and finish times, bubbles etc. I am sorry, but we must be fair to everyone.

More information for parents can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

I am sorry.  I know what a headache this has been for us to arrange to comply with the safety guidance and therefore, what problems this will cause for parents. I can only apologise. As soon as guidance changes, we will change with it.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding and patience at what continues to be, a very challenging and stressful time. I really do appreciate us all working together.

Obviously, if there is a further announcement from the government which changes any of these arrangements, we will get in touch with you as soon as possible.

Stay safe and well and enjoy the last few days of the sunny half term holiday.

Many thanks and kind regards,

**Nicki Walker**

**Headteacher**