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**Houghton Conquest
Lower School**

Growing together

Headteacher
Miss C A McCarthy

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Please read this letter in full as it includes important information about our prospective reopening of the school.

Re: Reopening of Houghton Conquest Lower School

From the week commencing 1st June at the earliest, the government are asking primary schools to welcome back children in some year groups, alongside the provision we are currently making. This is on the proviso that the 5 key tests set by government are met; we are likely to be informed as to whether these 5 conditions have been met on the 28th May. If the key conditions are not met, school will not be re-opening and I apologise now for the late notice and last-minute changes you may need to make.

Whilst the education and future of our children is of vital importance, our number one priority is to minimise any risks to children and staff onsite. This includes following all government guidance and guidelines including minimising in school movement, reducing class sizes, and ensuring social distancing measures are followed wherever possible. We cannot 100% guarantee that a child will always maintain a 2-metre distance from all pupils and staff in classrooms and during playtimes within their groups. Therefore, in cases where parents/carers feel their child is not ready, we support your decision to delay their return to school. By keeping children in small groups, we aim to minimise contact between children. However, within their own group, children will at times play or interact within a 1-metre range of each other and it is important that we recognise that this will happen. The decision to return your child to school is yours and we will support whatever decision you choose to make.

The purpose of this letter is to provide details of how we will manage this process should we be advised that we should open. We currently plan to open the school from **Tuesday 2nd June for pre-school, reception, and year 1**, as well as the **children of key workers and vulnerable children**. Staff will be undertaking additional staff training on Monday 1st June to ensure the school is fully operational in line with the new guidance, for when the children return on the Tuesday. However, we will be open for children of key workers and vulnerable children on the 1st June.



Structure of the School Day

Drop Offs

Arrival at school will be staggered to maintain social distancing, where parents will be asked to form an orderly line along the left-hand side of the walk-in path to prevent gathering of groups of people. The path will be marked with a one-way system and 2-metre markers, which we require you to adhere to. We would appreciate that only one parent/carer drops off their child if possible. There will be no access to the school building without a pre-arranged appointment; if you wish to book in a meeting or have any concerns/messages, please contact the school office in the first instance. Any child that displays signs of distress or is upset will be asked to go home and return the following day. We would appreciate your efforts in ensuring that you arrive at the times below rather than arriving early and waiting.

Drop offs for school will be at the following times:

- **8.45am – Priority Group (Children of Key Workers and Vulnerable Children)**
- **9.00am – Year 1**
- **9.15am – Reception**
- **9.30am – Pre-School**

If you have children in multiple year groups, you may drop your child off at whichever time is most convenient for you. If you are late for your child's start time at school, we will require you to rearrange a new drop-off time with the school office directly.

Collection

As with arrivals to school, collection times will be staggered to reduce the number of people on the school site. Your child's allocated class teacher/group leader will escort the children to the green gate and dismiss from here. If you could ensure that you have followed the same procedure as the morning drop-off, it will ensure a prompt exit from the school site. It is very important that you arrive at the times below instead of arriving early and waiting.

Collections from school will be at the following times:

- **2.45pm – Year 1**
- **3.00pm – Reception**
- **3.15pm – Priority Group (Children of Key Workers and Vulnerable Children)**
- **1.00pm – Pre-School**

If you have children in multiple year groups (excluding pre-school), we will ask that you collect your children from the earliest time slot.

Class Structure

Houghton Conquest Lower School will allocate children into bubbles/groups, which may be derived from their team colours within the appropriate year group. Possible contact between different groups of children and adults will be reduced as much as possible on site through children being educated in groups of no larger than 15, preferably 10 (dependent on the number of children attending), and having the same key adult(s) with them during the day. Groups will be educated within a classroom which may not be their normal classroom, but they will remain in that room for the duration of the day and will not mix with different groups of children.

A class teacher will be assigned to a class once we have confirmation from all parents whether they wish to send their child into school from Tuesday 2nd June, detailed below.

Lessons and activities within school will be a mixture of core subjects and activities that support your child's emotional well-being. The focus will be on short activities that stimulate interest and engagement. The timetable includes activities that utilise our outdoor spaces, will balance nurture and structure, and be predictable and organised, with clearly stated expectations. Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible will be discussed in class groups, with reviews planned to allow for changes in response to new developments.

Classrooms

All classrooms will be arranged with tables organised to provide as much space between them as possible. Classrooms have had all unnecessary furniture and soft furnishings removed from the room to create additional space. The Government recognises that playing together is a vital part of Early Learning. Guidance states "because it is challenging to reduce contact between young children in the Early Years setting, regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, objects and toys, as well as hand washing are particularly important." We have looked at the equipment we use and have selected only those toys which are most easily cleaned. We will limit the number of children playing at any activity at any time, but it must be recognised that children will be playing alongside their friends and sharing equipment and that cleaning and handwashing will be key ways that risk is minimised.

To help limit the sharing of resources, children will be allocated a clear plastic pencil case with resources they will need for their school day, and this will remain in school and will be only theirs to use.

Playtime

Our school playground will be partitioned into zones/areas for each **group** to have their own allocated area to play within to minimise the risk of groups of children mixing. Children will remain in their allocated groups.

Lunchtimes

All children will eat in their designated classrooms in their allocated group. In order to adhere to hygiene standards, all tables/desks will be wiped down using antibacterial cleaning materials before lunch. We **will not** be providing hot meals on site, nor will the children be eating in the main hall as this poses a number of challenges in terms of safely providing for the children. You may provide your child with a packed lunch or, under the Universal Free School Meal/Free School Meal Plan (UFSM/FSM), we can provide your child with a cold packed lunch each day. After the children have finished their lunch, the children will be escorted to their zone on the playground for them to play in their allocated group and area.

Expectations

Uniform

All children will be expected to wear normal school uniform or their school PE kit and can alternate throughout the week. The expectation is that children will wear freshly cleaned clothes each day to minimise the risk of transmission of any potential molecules.

Your child will only need to bring a water bottle, their packed lunch (unless UIFSM/FSM) and a coat/sun hat (weather permitting). On entry to the classroom, your child will be expected to wash their hands immediately, place their packed lunch in an allocated area in the classroom, put their coat on the back of their chair and their water bottle in their space. They will not be expected to go into the cloakroom.

Children will not be set any homework during this time. Children will not be sent home with school reading books to support infection control strategies.

Hygiene

Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible will be discussed in class groups, with reviews planned to allow for changes in response to new developments. Classrooms will be equipped with the appropriate supplies to ensure that hygiene is paramount during this time. Staff will explicitly teach and supervise health and hygiene arrangements, including observing children's behaviour and encouraging them not to touch their faces.

Sickness

A child who has symptoms, or feels unwell in any way, should not be sent into school.

Children or staff who developed symptoms within school will be sent home. In this scenario, the individual with symptoms would need to be isolated, following government guidance and should be tested. The group that this individual is a part of will be informed and they may also require testing but at this stage would not need to isolate and can still come to school. If the individual with symptoms tests positive, all members of the group will be informed and isolate too. If the test is negative, the individual may return to school. The government have ensured test results are received within a couple of days.

Home Learning

Children who are not attending school will still have access to resources provided for home learning, either hard copies or sent via email. Class teachers will respond to emails sent to the class email addresses during allotted times during the week. Please understand that all teachers will be leading a group of children within the school so communication time may be slower than previously.

More information with regards to home learning will be available after half-term.

I appreciate that these are difficult times and the decision whether to send your child back to school is extremely difficult. It is important to us that we are honest and transparent with regard to our vision of how we can best support children and staff returning to school safely, following the government guidelines.

It is our intention to monitor and review our provision on a daily and weekly basis. Should these evaluations suggest an issue that we cannot address then we may need to reduce this provision for the safety of staff and children. We will adhere to changing government guidelines when it is released.

Will your child return to school?

We would like to know if you wish to send your child back to school from Tuesday 2nd June – please email office@hcschool.org.uk with your child's name and your intentions for their return to school by **10am on Friday 29th May**, this will give you an opportunity to listen to the Prime Minister's next key speech in order to inform your decision. This will allow us to allocate your child a group and class teacher; we will aim to communicate this with you individually by the end of the day on **Friday 29th May**.

We support and understand your decision, whether you wish to send your child back to school from Tuesday 2nd June, or not. This decision will not be held against you, and we will support you with continuing home learning for your child if they remain at home.

If you have elected not to send your child to school and then do change your mind, please let us know as soon as possible. Similarly, if you have elected to send your child to school and then decided not to, please let us know as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued support, and please rest assured that we are working as hard as possible to minimise risk and make the return to school as safe and successful as possible, following government guidelines. We have added a 'Closure' page to our school website, which has some useful information and links, and information on getting children ready to return to school. More information will be added to this page over time.

On the following pages, I have collated some Frequently Asked Questions from your survey feedback. If you do have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

We hope you have a lovely half-term – enjoy the beautiful weather!

Yours sincerely



Miss J Heaslip
Acting Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions

I have doubts about my child's ability to adhere to social distancing measures or keep him/herself clean and his/her hands away from his/her face.

It is recognised that young children and those with Special Educational Needs may not be able to understand the need for social distancing and may also seek close interaction with their peers or adults to provide reassurance. We will try to manage these risks by keeping children in small groups and trying, as far as possible, to keep the same pupils and staff members together from day to day. We will stagger playtimes so that different groups do not interact. We have changed the physical layout of our classrooms to minimise contact and mixing. We will encourage children to clean their hands often, and we will regularly clean surfaces that are touched frequently. However, we cannot 100% guarantee that a child will always maintain 2m distance from all pupils and staff in classrooms or during playtimes. Therefore, in cases where parents and carers feel their child is not ready, we support your decision to delay their return to school. All that we ask is that you continue to support your child's education at home.

Will children wear PPE? Will staff wear PPE?

Children will not be required to wear PPE. Whilst staff will not routinely wear PPE, there may be times when staff will wear PPE. Examples of this are when staff are providing intimate care such as when helping with toileting; where there needs to be very close contact such as treating a cut or graze; and where a child is unwell (either with a "normal" illness such as sickness, or is suspected of showing symptoms related to Covid-19). The PPE consists of plastic gloves, a plastic disposable apron and a face mask such as currently worn by some staff in supermarkets.

What if children touch or hug each other?

We will do all we can to encourage social distancing, including removing "spare" chairs from tables to discourage close proximity. However, we cannot guarantee that another child will not spontaneously touch or hug your child. By keeping children in small groups, we aim to minimise this. By asking parents to be vigilant and ensure that children who display symptoms are not brought to school, we also hope that risks are minimised further. However, within their own "bubble" group, very young children, such as nursery and reception pupils and those in Year 1, will at times play or interact within a 1 metre range of each other and it is important that we recognise that this will happen.

What if my child needs help? How can they socially distance from staff?

Staff cannot attend to a child if they are distressed or need first aid or intimate care and still maintain a distance of 2 metre. If a child comes up to a staff member and asks for help, it will be offered. We will do all we can to minimise our staff proximity to pupils, and this will be easier for pupils in Year 1 - but it is important that parents and carers realise this will happen from time to time.

How will the EYFS setting work now? Will children be playing in individual chalk squares? My child has missed their friends and will want to play with them.

The Government recognises that playing together is a vital part of Early Learning. Guidance states "because it is challenging to reduce contact between young children in the Early

Years setting, regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, objects and toys, as well as hand washing are particularly important.” We have looked at the equipment we use and have selected only those toys which are most easily cleaned. We will limit the number of children playing at any activity at any time, but it must be recognised that EYFS children will be playing alongside their friends and sharing equipment and that cleaning and handwashing will be the key way that risk is minimised. We will not be introducing individual chalk squares into the play area for any year group.

I am a key worker and my child is not in the specified year groups. Can they still come to school?

Yes, any child of a key worker is still welcome in school, even if they are in Years 2-4. They will be part of a “bubble” group so that they continue to mix with the same group of children and are not interacting with other groups.

Can I send my child back for only some of the week?

At this moment in time this will not be possible; however should the school see a large number returning then this may become necessary. We are following government and local guidance.