



# Kirkby on Bain Church of England Primary School



*'Learning together for life'*

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Firstly, I hope you and your families are all well and happy. Thank you for the huge level of responses to our survey. Health guidance must of course dictate how the provision would look within the classroom but your responses have helped us to consider options and shape the explanation of our way forward. Our intent is to allay or reduce your obvious concerns and confusion as far as possible.

As headteacher, it is my job and privilege to ensure we deliver the very best provision we can to meet the needs of our children. Our children will always be at the heart of all decisions we make. I have always sought to be honest and open with you about those decisions and the reasons for them and I have no intention of changing that now.

I am sure you will already recognise that finding the best way forward has not been an easy task and it is definitely not a decision we have taken lightly. Following the announcement on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, we remained determined to explore all options we could potentially put in place to achieve the wider opening of schools, as we had been asked to do. DfE guidance has since been issued and reissued, closely followed by local guidance from Lincolnshire County Council and we have attempted to reorganise our school site in line with that guidance.

I have already mentioned that school would be a very different place for any children who return before the start of the summer holidays. I feel it is important to stress that in reality, I do not see this as a 'return' in any way, shape or form. This is an alternative provision and is opposed to the ethos, values, approach and family feeling we work so hard to thread throughout school life and all we do. Many survey responses acknowledge confidence that the decisions we make will be 'in the best interests of our children'. You trust us to do our best for them and we would never put that trust at risk.

We have been asked to prepare for potential wider opening from 1<sup>st</sup> June at the earliest but this is too important to us to follow those wishes without reflection or question. It is not for us to determine whether it is safe for children to return from a health point of view. We are not and do not claim to be medical professionals and have to trust in those who are. The guidance states how we can make it as safe as we can for pupils, staff and parents and we can assure you that we will follow that guidance in order to protect our school community. We do however feel qualified to question the value added by bringing more children back to school and we find it hard to believe that the provision we will have to deliver will not harm our children's emotional and mental health and wellbeing. We recognise that they are missing school, their friends and their teachers but this will not be countered by returning in this way. Unsurprisingly, many of you are worried about the impact of not getting into school on your child/children's wellbeing. This along with a wish for 'some normality' are the most cited reasons for wanting to get back before the summer holiday. We feel it is crucial you understand the provision we have considered and rejected in order to see our reasons for feeling neither of those wishes would be granted.

The guidance remains to socially distance at 2m and this would be necessary in a school setting to maintain what is thought to be a safe environment for pupils and staff. This is realistically impossible throughout any school day and by maintaining it we would put the emotional wellbeing of our children at risk. Our children, particularly the youngest year groups who have been prioritised to return first, will not understand why they are no longer allowed to play in the same space as their friend or share the same toys. We will have to keep reminding as it will not be natural behaviour for them and this will mean that they feel they are being told off all of the time; that their teacher or other adult does not care and they will start to feel negatively about school. These emotional scars will not be forgotten by September but the memories of what school used to be like will undoubtedly have been replaced with that negativity. We unfortunately cannot see any possible way to protect both physical and mental health within this environment.

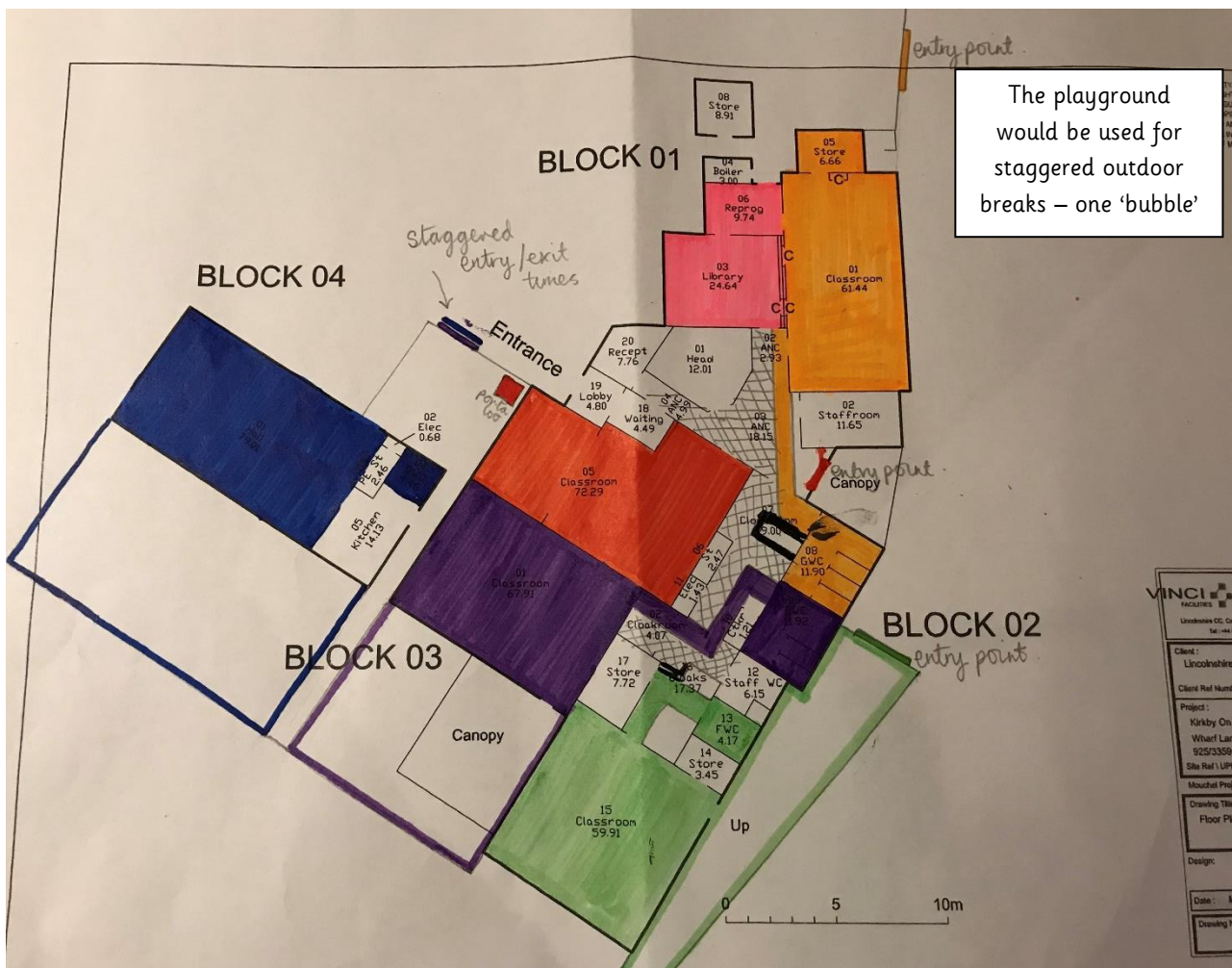
We strongly believe that our children are more likely to feel increased stress and less support in school than they will continuing with the high-quality home learning we have worked so hard to provide. Our children are receiving feedback, messages of support and contact, albeit it virtually, on a daily basis and that support will not be better as a result of them being physically in the school building. We are implementing G Suite/Google Classroom and trialling live lessons in Maple in a bid to offer further opportunities to heighten our home learning.

**Hope, Peace, Friendship, Forgiveness, Respect and Trust**

In order to comply with guidance/regulations and fulfil our duty of care to pupils, staff and parents this is what our new provision would need to look like.

Wider opening of school would mean:

- Our site would be zoned into separate areas of school. The coloured areas show the only spaces each group would be able to access throughout their time in school. (see picture). Lunches will be eaten within that same space.



- The different zones would house one group of children with one designated adult.
- These groups would provide a 'bubble', limiting exposure for pupils and staff, and would remain in place throughout the weeks leading to the summer holidays.
- Groups would remain separate from all other groups throughout every day in school.
- We could not guarantee that children would be in their own classroom and children within a class would be separated into at least two groups to maintain social distancing. Rooming would need to be dictated by the capacity of the room and the number of children attending.
- We could not guarantee that children would be with their class teacher as each member of staff can only work with one group throughout this time. Some groups will be working with a TA.
- Within their room, children would be given a specific desk or area, socially distanced from their peers and from the designated staff member.
- Additional, regular interim cleaning within the zone during the school day (when children are present) can only be conducted by the adult assigned to that group to maintain an isolated 'bubble'.
- Resources, equipment and toys cannot be shared between children within a group or across groups. Each child will be given a plastic pack that can be wiped clean containing some resources that only they can use. These will include a whiteboard and pen, some coloured pencils, a pen and/or pencil, a ruler, some maths resources etc. a book or books and a few small play items.

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In stark contrast to what our children are used to, particularly in Maple and Chestnut One, this is what our classrooms would have to look like in order to adhere to guidance:



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Your survey responses show that the vast majority of you already share our concerns and do not want a return at this point.

Following a governing body meeting this morning, we have decided that we will not be opening more widely as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> June. Whilst the guidance dictates that the 2m social distancing is necessary within a primary school setting we feel the only option is to adhere to that in order to safeguard our whole school community. We are not prepared to risk the safety or wellbeing of our pupils, staff or parents by relaxing the scientific guidance and therefore we do not believe being physically in school is in the best interests of our children.

We will continue to review this on a weekly basis and continue to strive to do the best for our children and our school community.

Please know that our hesitation in encouraging a return to school is not because we do not care. We desperately miss all of our wonderful children and would like nothing more than to return to the way things were. Your children are the very reason we do the jobs we do and it is a privilege to spend our working days with them. We are hesitating precisely because we care so very much for them.

Stay safe and take care,

Miss Day, Mrs Tuite and our Governing Body

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