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Head teacher: Mrs Vicky Barron BSc Hons GTP Primary

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you have all had a lovely summer holiday. The staff team and I are all looking forward to seeing you all again next week when term begins. Over the past six weeks we have been preparing for school return and this letter gives more information about some of the things you need to know, or be reminded of, prior to starting again next week. Class teachers will also provide more information about their timetables, curriculum coverage and classroom routines in the first week of term.

For parents that are new to our school or whose children didn't return in the summer term, this will be new information. For those of you whose children returned to school for the last week of term this letter serves as an update now that we are all back in the main school premises. As you would expect, we have made a few alterations, so please read this letter carefully.

School starts again for all children on Thursday 3rd September. All children are able to start on the same day. Staff will be in school on the Tuesday and Wednesday for our INSET days so if you have any questions please do give us a call at school then.

The Government and Local Authority (Gloucestershire County Council) have provided extensive guidance, health and safety advice, checklists and a risk assessment that we were already using and which we have checked and updated where needed from July. The information given here may therefore be subject to change, should the guidance for schools change. The GCC Safety, Health and Environment team developed their risk assessment model to assist schools make their own plans for reopening. The preventative measures suggested by them are not mandatory but were provided as guidance on reducing the risk of transmission. Each school/setting was asked to consider their own situation and adapt the assessment by editing the measures where appropriate, which we have done to the best of our ability.

Please note that we cannot plan for every eventuality but we will always be doing our best.

Safety in school is of course our main priority, combined with the well-being of your children and our staff team in connection with Covid-19. The measures we outline below have taken much thought and discussion. Whilst we are happy to receive feedback as always, please do not assume we will be able to respond to any specific requests you make. The document was prepared in conjunction with staff



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and governors (including parent governors) and as such stands as an agreement for our school. Amendments will be made if/when the guidance changes.

Our environment

As a small school, and with your co-operation and a common sense approach that is child centred , we are going to try and continue to have the school environment looking as normal as possible. We will not therefore be placing extensive markings on the floor to show you where to stand with your children when you arrive and leave our premises. As adults, you are now well practised at standing apart from others and we ask you to use your good sense when bringing your children in or collecting them from school.

Please wait at a safe 2m minimum distance from others when dropping off or collecting your child. Please be respectful of keeping your distance, each family will do things differently and have different views on distancing but we would ask you to observe this measure when on the school premises.

Our bubbles

Under current Government guidance we are now able to have larger bubbles of children than the bubbles of 15 that we had during the summer term. This has posed many questions for school leaders both locally and nationally as to what constitutes a suitable bubble size that is manageable in the longer term. Each school will be doing things differently depending on a range of factors such as their premises, staffing and numbers of children on roll at the school.

Many secondary schools are having Year Group sized bubbles - so for my children at secondary their bubble size is now 150 children. For children at Sheepscombe, for the purposes of Covid-19 infection control, we have made the decision to have 'building sized' bubbles in the first instance. Children in the Main School building (Eagle year 5 & 6 and Kestrel year 3 & 4 Classes) will be kept separate from the Merlin classrooms (which to the end of term 2, and possibly beyond, will be Nursery, Reception, year 1 and Year 2). This actually gives us almost two halves of the school in terms of the distribution of numbers.

Within each bubble children will be further split into their regular classes as usual for teaching but being 'one bubble' for Covid-19 purposes will allow some movement of children between groups for learning where needed. It will also allow the classes in each building to play together at outdoor playtimes.

A nearby local primary school has sought permission from the DfE /Public Health England to run their 70 pupil school as 'one bubble' which would mean their school could revert to 'running as usual'. As a





group of head teachers we are awaiting the outcome of this request as this will have implications for all small schools. We will keep you updated.

Parking

Please park sensitively in the village and not near villagers' front doors if you can avoid it. We are keen to protect our village neighbours as far as possible and they will once again be anxious about the increase in footfall in the village. Please keep your children near to you and do not let them run off ahead of you at the end of the school day - we cannot stress enough how important this is, regardless of the Covid-19 transmission risk - this is a safety issue at all times. Please also maintain a 2m distance from any villager you meet. The village hall car park is available to park in now that our whole school are back on our main site.

Route to school

We have removed the one way system of drop off and collection at the current time so you may approach the school to drop off or collect in either direction - we will keep this under review and may need to return to a one way system. Please do try not to stop to chat on the narrow footpath so as to avoid congestion and please do keep your distance as much as you can when passing others.

Breakfast Club

We will restart our Breakfast club from the first day of term, held in the Conservatory from 8.00 each day of the week. As this means children from different bubbles will mix, we ask that you only use Breakfast Club if it is essential to your ability to get to work on time. Places must now be booked in advance, if you need a place, please ring Mrs Powell to book your child in on the days that you require. There will still be a £2.00 charge for each session which will be added to your Parent Pay account. The Conservatory will be kept well ventilated and children will be asked to sanitise or wash their hands on arrival.

Arrival and Departure times

We don't feel that a set time for a staggered arrival time for each year group is especially helpful in our setting, nor does it help families with multiple children. Therefore, children can arrive at school between 8.30 and 9.00 each day. We have widened the drop off times and therefore it should still be possible to have a spread of arrivals, just as happened at the end of last term.

Please do not arrive after 9.00 - we have allowed a bigger window for drop off so earlier is still better! Arrivals after 9.00 will need to sign in at the office and will be marked as late.

Please note, children may not come into school before 8.30 a.m. - if you need an earlier drop off time you need to book a place at Breakfast Club. Children must not be left unsupervised on the playground.

Entry into the school buildings





Children in Eagle (y5 and 6) and Kestrel (y3 and 4) classes should come straight into the main building via the cloakroom as they usually would, sanitise their hands at the door, or wash them, then go into class directly. Eagle class will keep their bags under their desks (they have a desk each so there is plenty of space) and keep their coats on the backs of their chairs. Kestrel children will hang up their coats and bags in the cloakroom.

We are sorry, but it remains that no parents may come into this building at any time. If you need to speak to a teacher or member of staff they will happily come out to you if they are able, just ask your child to fetch them or speak to Mrs Powell in the office who will arrange a time for you to meet them or pass on a message. Children in Eagle and Kestrel classes should come into school independently and no parents should come beyond the wooden gate by the office, the gate will be open for children. Please respect this rule.

Ideally, only one parent or carer should bring your child/ren to school and pick them up. Please do not stay long on the playground at either end of the day as we need to keep the playground as clear as possible. If you want to chat to other parents, please do so on the move. Staff may need to ask you to move on at the end of the day, so please don't put them in a tricky position. We are sorry but the playground and play area is not available to play in at the end of the day at the current time.

For Nursery/Reception and Year 1 children in the Merlin classrooms -we will come out to meet you and your child when you arrive at school. This will avoid congestion and close contact in our cloakroom. If your child is happy to come in with us directly that's great, we will then wave to you from the window or door with them if you wish. This has worked really well and been very successful in the last weeks of the summer term for all children.

However, we know that some children in Merlin class may need their adult to come in briefly to say goodbye as they usually would especially in these early weeks - hence why we will allow, where needed, one adult into the cloakroom at a time. This may mean you have to wait outside for a short time. Please keep a reasonable distance from others while waiting. If we have a busy period staff will take children from both doors. It is helpful to us if your children know the routine before they come to school; it makes for an easier transition for everyone.

We will of course still hold a child's hand if they need us to and offer the usual emotional support. We honestly believe that refusing contact with young children is potentially damaging to their confidence and feeling of security - we would rather just wash our hands, and theirs, afterwards. We will help children to sanitise or wash their hands when they arrive inside the classroom and will have staff available inside to help with this.

Departure times

Last term we had different pick up times for different groups of children as we were also managing pick up from the village hall too. This term we will trial a widened pick up time for all children. Children will be ready to go home from 3.00p.m until 3.15p.m.





In the Merlin classrooms we will send children out to you when we see you. In the main school building you may also fetch your child from 3.00 onwards. Mrs Powell will look out for you or you can come to her door.

After School Clubs

We will be restarting our after school clubs from the second week of term - so from Monday 7th September onwards. They will run until 4.15p.m promptly. There will be a club for each bubble - one for the Merlin Classrooms and a second club for the Eagle and Kestrel Classrooms each day so that children are still in their bubbles. We will send out more details about each club at the end of the first week of term once we have discussed the format and timetabling further during INSET days. With the exception of Sewing Club with Mrs Heath for the older children, there is no charge for these clubs.

Daily attendance

We are now open for all 5 days of the week and we do expect your child in school every day, as normal, all week. The only exceptions to this is for Reception children who can have a more flexible schedule until they turn 5 and for our Little Lambs children who choose their own sessions. We do not offer flexi-schooling and we would expect children from 5 upwards to be in school full time, 5 days per week.

If your child is unwell and not attending school that day then please ring school first thing in the morning as you usually would to report them absent in the usual way. Our safeguarding procedures still apply, so if we don't hear from you we will call you. If your child is unwell and has been sent for a Covid-19 test please inform us, and then let us know the outcome as soon as you know it. We cannot stress how important this is.

Speaking to Mrs Powell in the office.

As our office is small, parents will not be allowed into the office at all. If you need to speak to Mrs Powell please ring the bell and open the door when the buzzer goes but then stay outside to speak from a distance. On warmer days we will prop the door open for easier access but please still stay outside. Bear in mind that others will have used the door handle so you may wish to sanitise or wash your own hands afterwards.

Uniform

When term starts we will return to wearing School Uniform and not home clothes (Little Lambs will wear their own clothes), as indicated in the previous version of this letter last term. Please help us by keeping uniform as clean as possible. Sensible shoes will be needed - trainers are still acceptable or the more typical school shoes. We will still be doing outside learning at Forest School and Sport, see below.





Sport

Every Tuesday, to avoid the need for changing, all children should wear sports clothes to school all day and must wear or bring trainers. On Friday each week children will need trainers and a pair of shorts or joggers in their bag with them as they may have a second short session of PE (exact timetable to be arranged).

Please note we will NOT be going offsite for PE to Bentham on Tuesdays and pick up is at school as usual until further notice. We will be changing our venue from Bentham in the longer term to a new venue, but this is not yet confirmed due to the regulations around Covid-19 for all indoor sports facilities.

We hope the weather will be kind to us so we may be allowed to use the cricket pitch for whole school sport afternoons with children remaining in their class bubbles.

Forest School

Children will this year attend Forest School every third week on a Monday from 12.00, in their classes - so Merlin, Kestrel and Eagle will all go to Forest School as separate groups. Merlin class will go first on 7th September, Kestrel on 14th and Eagle on 21st. Children need to wear outdoor clothes suitable for the temperature of the day and will need a packed lunch with them on their day, or one can be ordered from school, as usual. If it is not their Forest School week children should wear uniform to school as normal as they will have Science sessions on those afternoons. We are always pleased to have parent volunteers for Forest School so please see Mrs Powell if you would like to volunteer - we will ask you though to maintain a 2m distance from pupils during sessions and to provide your details for track and trace.

Sickness

Our staff are reliant on your honesty to keep your child at home if they are unwell, with any symptoms of any illness. **This is really important and is our best preventative measure - we all rely on each other for this.** Children who have needed Calpol or similar in the morning before school or who 'don't seem quite right' or who have a 'poorly tummy' should be kept at home. We cannot have children in school even with mild symptoms. Please help us with this. The same applies to staff who will not come to work if they are feeling unwell.

Covid-19 symptoms or diagnosis

If a child or staff member develops any of the symptoms of coronavirus, they will need to take a Covid-19 test. All staff, children, parents and families of those who are attending school will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus.

Under the rules at the time of writing, if the test is positive they will need to self-isolate for 10 days and their fellow household members and anyone they have come into close contact with will be told self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need





to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to their school and the fellow household members and anyone they have come into contact with can continue as usual without the need to self-isolate.

A positive Covid-19 test from a child or staff member in school will therefore likely mean that the whole bubble of children will need to self-isolate for 14 days - we follow the procedures set down by Public Health England on this matter around what defines 'close contact' and we will advise you accordingly should this arise.

Classrooms

Eagle and Kestrel classrooms have had their tables re-organised to allow for each child to have their own table. Children will keep their water bottle on their table and this will become their work station when they are in the classroom doing any written work.

Children already have their own set of stationery in a zip wallet provided by school, so that resources are not shared. This will remain in school. New children and those returning to school for the first time will be given a zip wallet of resources.

Merlin classroom still has some items temporarily put away in line with Government guidance. This includes dressing up clothes, cushions and soft toys. We have not allocated set tables to children in Nursery or Reception as we do not feel this is appropriate for very young children. Instead we have stocked their zip wallets with resources - pens, pencils, glue stick, scissors etc. When they want to write or draw they will take their wallet to an available table.

Children in Year 1 & 2 have had their classroom spaces re-organised to allow for more spaced out working at tables. They will not always be sat at their tables as much learning is still practical and will not always be working at the same table, but we will sanitise tables regularly as we have already been doing.

We will continue to wipe all surfaces and toilet areas down regularly in line with our enhanced cleaning schedule and children will wash or sanitise their hands more frequently than usual. We will wash toys after use where needed and at the end of the day.

Children will still be able to play in small groups; we do not intend to have them sat behind a desk all day.

We will keep all classrooms well ventilated with windows and doors open where possible.

Pencil Cases

The advice about the sharing of resources states that pencil cases from home should not be brought into school so please keep them at home.





Toys from home

Whilst we know Merlin children love to bring toys from home we are still not going to be able to allow this - if they do bring something in please can you pop it in their bag and it can be safely on their peg ready for the end of the day. The same applies to all other children. We will ask children to put home toys away if they do arrive in the classroom.

School lunches

Our catering provider Caterlink has now brought their staff back from furlough. Our kitchen will therefore be reopened for school lunches when term begins.

If your child brings a packed lunch from home, they should be able to manage it for themselves - please can we ask that children have pots or flasks they can open by themselves if you use them.

Of course we will not refuse to help them but it would help us if they can be independent. For example - snack bars in wrappers - wrappers could be removed at home or you could 'start them off' at the top when you pack them so the child can easily remove the remainder of the wrapper.

Last term staff had to peel many oranges that were too hard for children to peel - it isn't an ideal situation for us to be handling their food - so please could we ask that you peel oranges at home and pop the segments in a pot or wrap to make it easier for your child. Many thanks.

Outdoor learning

We are hoping for some lovely weather and will use the outdoor environment where we can (as we usually would). We will be outside for PE and Forest School but staff will take every opportunity they can to use the outdoor environment while the weather is fine.

Home learning

We are set up already for home learning with Google Classrooms. Should we be required to lock down again in part or whole then we will return to using this to set work for children at home. New children will be given a login and instructions on how to access Google Classrooms in the first weeks of term.

PPE

Although the use of face masks in public is now much more widespread the situation around schools remains that PPE should not be worn by staff or children.

To restate our position:

Staff will not routinely be wearing PPE when working with children in our school. Government guidance does not approve face coverings in schools, nor the continued use of PPE equipment in schools. The direct quote from the guidance is below (and may be subject to change)





The majority of staff in education, childcare and children's social care settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain distance of 2 metres from others.

PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases:

- *children, young people and learners whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way*
- *PPE should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child, young person or other learner displaying coronavirus symptoms*

We do have a small amount of PPE in school as per the opening recommendations; this is for staff use if a child was to require personal care or became unwell and needed looking after away from other children until a parent arrived to fetch them

These are the conditions set out by the Government about the wearing of PPE and to which we will adhere:

...if a child, young person, or other learner, becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn.

And finally

Hopefully this document will give you a clearer idea of how we plan to run our school in the coming weeks. I am happy to answer questions that are not covered here, but not to amend anything I have stated here at this current time.

We do not intend, in any way, for school to be a scary place for pupils.

Please contact Mrs Powell if you have further questions and we will do our best to get back to you, questions may be collated into a FAQ document and sent out at a later date, as more detail is given by Government and the Local Authority.

I know this seems like a lot of information to take in and I apologise for that - our school is still a lovely place to be.

Kind regards,

Vicky Barron - Head teacher

