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1st March 2021

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your patience whilst Jeff and I worked through the new Government Covid-19 Guidelines issued on 22nd February. I am very pleased to confirm that we will be able to open the school site to all pupils of the Kindergarten, Lower and Upper School from Monday 8th March 2021. It will be a delight to see every pupil return to school once again; to be reunited with their peers and teachers.

There are a number of changes which we have now incorporated into our updated risk assessment which can be found on our website on the Pupil Safety (COVID) page. Our teachers will receive updated training around these changes on the newly announced INSET day of Friday 5th March. As per my earlier email, the school will be closed to all pupils on that day.

The major changes to the Government Guidance for Full Reopening are:

1. Schools have been asked to set up testing facilities for secondary aged pupils.
2. Schools have been asked to implement the wearing of face coverings in classrooms, as well as in busy corridors and communal areas, where social distancing cannot be maintained. This applies to any pupil over 11 years and to all adults.
3. Schools have been asked to facilitate self-testing for staff.

We are committed to working with the recommendations and directives of the Government as they apply to our school and campus, to ensure our school remains a safe place for pupils and staff.

South Devon Steiner School as a COVID Testing Facility

Our decision **not** to set up and staff an onsite COVID-19 testing centre at our school remains. Our current situation is that we do not have the internal capacity, nor the financial support currently being made available to state funded schools, to implement this.

Furthermore, we know from our consent data that approximately two thirds of our parents do not give their consent to medical (COVID) testing of their child or the collection of biometric information from their child. As such, any testing provided on site would be for a very small number of pupils, thereby providing a very minimal risk reduction in terms of virus transmission by asymptomatic pupils.

It is likely that the Government will provide self testing kits for pupils in the coming weeks for families who wish to begin the self testing program at home. I will send more information as this becomes available.

As before, we will strictly adhere to the System of Controls as developed by PHE to ensure the ongoing safety of our pupils and staff.

Face Coverings

At SDSS we are very lucky to have extensive grounds and a relatively small number of pupils at this time. As such, we will not be asking pupils or staff to wear face coverings in school, unless they choose to do so.

The reasons for this are two-fold:

1. Our classes are small enough and our classrooms large enough to facilitate physical distancing between pupils and staff.
2. We do not have busy corridors or communal areas. Where there may have been congestion before, we have rerouted pupils outdoors. We have also implemented toilet passes to reduce the possibility of busy restrooms.

Please note that we can only do this with the cooperation of our pupils and staff. This approach can only work to keep all parties safe and risks to a minimum if pupils and teachers adhere to physical distancing rules.

If physical distancing becomes an issue in the classrooms, we will have no choice but to review this decision.

Please do have a chat with your child ahead of their return to school to let them know how we are managing the situation and how they can best support it.

Can my child wear a face covering if they wish to?

At present, all pupils over the age of eleven and staff have the right to wear a face covering if they wish to. We will have a system in place for the safe wearing and removal of face coverings. You can find a short video [here](#) to watch with your child if you wish for them to wear a face covering in school. Please send them in with TWO face coverings each day in case one becomes dirty or damp. They will also need a supply of sealable plastic bags for the safe storage of their face covering. Parents will be expected to launder their child's face coverings. We will have a small number of disposable face coverings available for those pupils who forget their own and wish to wear one.

Self-testing Program

The Government is asking schools to support asymptomatic testing as part of its strategy for a safe return to school. As such, all school staff will be able to receive the Government issue Lateral Flow Device (LFD) self-testing kits should they wish to participate. The Government strongly recommends that school staff take these tests twice weekly, however testing is not mandatory and does not form a condition of employment for our staff.

COVID Safety Measures

As before the period of national lockdown, the School must comply with health and safety law, which requires us to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. We will use the following system of controls to manage the risks identified:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- ensure the wearing of face coverings in recommended circumstances
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable
- Promote and engage with asymptomatic testing, where possible.
- Ensure individuals wear appropriate PPE where necessary

The School will use a number of methods to reduce contacts including:

- grouping children together in bubbles
- avoiding contact between groups
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks
- staff maintaining distance from pupils and other staff

We must therefore ask our parents to support us by:

- Keeping your child at home if they develop a fever, persistent cough or lose their sense of taste / smell.
- Providing your child with the appropriate face coverings and sealable plastic bags should they choose to wear one.
- Seeking a test for coronavirus and self isolating in line with Government advice if your child or a member of your household develops coronavirus symptoms.
- Communicating with us where coronavirus is suspected or confirmed.
- Encouraging your child to use our hand sanitiser upon entry to and exit from our school.
- Providing your consent to us sharing your data with NHS Test and Trace.
- Talking to your child in advance about the bubbles we have created, and the need to physically distance from other pupils and their teacher where it is age appropriate (more details below).
- Arriving at school **on time** - not early or late - to allow the drop off and collection system to function well for everyone.
- Leaving school swiftly after dropping off and picking up your child/ren, and adhering to physical distancing rules when on site (even in the car park!).

Our bubbles

We have made some changes to our bubbles - please check below to ensure you understand which bubble your child/ren are in. Please note that Class 3 is now in the Acorn Bubble and pupils will need to arrive 10 minutes earlier (8.15am-2.55pm).

The bubbles are:

Willow Kindergarten	Acorn Bubble - Classes 1, 2 and 3
Hazelwood Kindergarten	Oak Bubble - Classes 4 and 5
Appletree Kindergarten	Greenwood Bubble - Classes 6, 7 and 8
Hood Barn - Classes 9, 10, 11 & 12	Gemel Bubble - Classes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 for some subject lessons only

Drop Off and Collection Arrangements

Please double check the new [drop off and collection times](#), which include details on bubbles, designated gates, classroom allocation, and of course the short day options for classes 1-3. There are some amendments to our timings so it is imperative that you review the times to avoid any confusion. Any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: kaycee.fordham@steiner-south-devon.org.

School Office Opening Times

Please note that the School Office will remain closed during the school day for the foreseeable future. It will open each morning and each afternoon to support families arriving late, and to allow parents the opportunity to ask questions, deliver things to the school etc. Opening hours will be: 8.30am - 9.00am and 2.45pm - 3.30pm each day.

Transport

We would ask that where possible, parents and pupils do not use public transport to travel to and from school as this carries an additional risk of virus distribution. Instead, families are asked to use their own transport, walk to school or bicycles. Please observe physical distancing in the bicycle shed if you use it.

If you arrive via public transport, we will have bins at the gates for pupils to safely dispose of their face coverings. Those using reusable face coverings should bring a sealable plastic bag with them to store the face covering in, during the school day.

Car Park and Vehicle Drop Off System

We will revert to the staggered drop off and pick up times which require your cooperation to work effectively. Parents are asked to arrive promptly at their designated time (not early and not late) to allow their child to go through the gates swiftly, and to limit the number of cars in the queue.

Late arrivals cannot enter site with a different bubble and in this instance, parents will need to accompany their child to the new School Office, located next to the kitchen (in the old Music room for those familiar with it), where you will need to wait until such time as all bubbles have been admitted and it is clear to move through the buildings without the possibility of mixing bubbles.

As this will of course be incredibly inconvenient and stressful for all concerned, we ask that you make every effort to arrive within the correct time window.

Kindergarten families and those in classes 1, 2 and 3 should park and walk to their designated gate/s. Please wait observing physical distancing rules. Once you have dropped your child/ren, please leave the site swiftly to allow other parents to use the car park. Parking is limited.

Families for classes 4-8 should use the vehicle drop off and pick up system where possible. Please drive very slowly, and queue closely to provide maximum space for vehicles to queue safely.

Upper School students can be dropped in car park 3 (by Hood Barn) and wait to be met by a teacher, observing physically distancing rules.

Where families have more than one child at different drop off and pick up times, it might be easiest to park and make your way on foot to collect them from their designated gates.

Physical Distancing at School

We have an obligation to ask our staff, parents and pupils of classes 6 and above to adhere to physical distancing. That is, maintaining a distance of at least 1 metre and where possible 2 metres from each other, as much as possible.

Younger pupils in classes 4 and 5 will be asked to give each other and their teacher 'space'.

Pupils in Kindergarten and classes 1 to 3 will not be asked to physically distance themselves from each other but staff will maintain more distance than usual from the children where possible and will always maintain at least 1 metre distance from other adults.

Our teachers and staff are committed to 'being worthy of imitation' and will guide our pupils to manage this expectation carefully and consistently, whilst also holding an awareness of our obligations as a school.

Returning to School

If you or your child have any concerns about returning to school, please do not hesitate to contact either myself, Jeff (jeff.van.zyl@steiner-south-devon.org) or Kate Barker (kate.barker@steiner-south-devon.org) for support.

Summer Schools

There have been a number of questions regarding whether our school will provide a summer school to help pupils 'catch up' after this period of lockdown. We are clear that this is not something we will offer for a number of reasons:

1. The large majority of pupils have engaged well with our remote learning programme. We were able to provide a high standard of online teaching which means that for most pupils, no significant work has been missed.
2. Our teachers have worked very hard to run their dual-classrooms this past half term, and our pupils have worked hard to keep up with their work at home / at school. As such, it would simply not be appropriate for our teachers to work through the holiday period when they should be recuperating and preparing for the next academic year.
3. Our pupils deserve a holiday and a rest.

As always, if you have any concerns about your child's education please do not hesitate to contact their teacher in the first instance, or Jeff van Zyl (Education Manager). Our teachers will of course be vigilant around the identification of children who may need additional support, either academically or otherwise.

With all that said, I look forward to welcoming you all back to school next week.

Kind regards,

Kaycee Fordham
Executive Assistant to Education Manager
COVID Safety Designated Person