



West Malling

CE Primary School & The McGinty Language Centre

Old Cricket Ground, Norman Road, West Malling, Kent ME19 6RL Acting Headteacher Mr David Rye MSc PGCE
Executive Headteacher Mr Matthew Clark MA NPQH
Tel 01732 842061 Email office@west-malling.kent.sch.uk www.west-malling.kent.sch.uk

2nd March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following the Prime Minister's announcement last week that schools will re-open fully on Monday March 8th 2021, I write to thank you for your support, and to outline plans for the return to school.

Once again as a community we have found ourselves stronger together, even though many of us have been working remotely and not within the physical school building.

From Monday March 8th our school will be open for **all** pupils. The reopening of education settings to all is a priority due to the impact of being out of school on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of children. The government is clear that the risk to children of catching coronavirus (COVID-19) from going to school is low. Furthermore, the prevalence of COVID-19 has fallen to lower levels, the most vulnerable people within society have been vaccinated and the NHS Test and Trace system helps us all quickly identify and contain any isolated infections which may occur.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils from Monday March 8th. Parents have a duty to ensure their child attends school each day, unless their child has a health condition which means they are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, and currently in receipt of a letter advising them to shield.

Any routine medical appointments your child needs should be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible then your child should either come into school and be collected immediately before the appointment, or return to school once the appointment has been attended. Please ensure that you have notified the school office of these appointments, either by phone or via office@west-malling.kent.sch.uk.

Risk Assessment

In preparing to re-open the school fully, we have once again carried out another detailed risk assessment to identify how we can lower risks to pupils and staff in all areas so that the school is a safe environment for all. Our aim is always to reduce the risk of a COVID-19 infection occurring and in this letter we set out a summary of the steps we have taken, many of which will be familiar to you all as they have been in place between September and December 2020.

Arrival and going home times

In order to minimise the number of adults and children around the school entrance at the same time, a staggered start time and end time to the school day for individual year groups will continue and these times are shown below. Some families with siblings were provided with individual times to avoid multiple trips to the site. These times also remain unchanged from before Christmas. If you cannot remember the time you were provided with, please contact the office either by phone or email.





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The one-way system to enter and leave the school site also remains in place. Only one adult per family should enter the site and it is essential to the smooth running of school that you do not arrive at school before your allocated time and that as soon as you have dropped off or collected your child you move away from the school site so that it remains uncrowded for those who follow you. Thank you for your ongoing support in this.

	Arrival time	End of school day
McGinty Language Centre	8:30	2:45
Chestnut (Year R)	9:00	3:15
Lime (Year 1)	8:55	3:10
Cherry (Year 2)	8:45	3:00
Mulberry (Year 3)	8:55	3:10
Oak (Year 4)	8:35	2:50
Willow (Year 5)	8:45	3:00
Ash (Year 6)	8:35	2:50

We urge families to walk, cycle or scoot to school wherever possible as this is both healthy and allows us to minimise the amount of vehicle movements at the front of school.

Visitors to school

Once again, we will aim to have as few external visitors onto the school site as possible. This is to reduce further the risk that someone could unintentionally bring in infection from outside. Any visitors who do need to be on the site will be asked to observe the same hygiene measures as everyone else and will be asked to keep a full 2 metre social distance from children and staff. Visiting adults will be asked to wear a face mask if they are entering the school building and social distancing cannot be maintained.

If you do need to speak to a teacher or another member of staff, please do so by contacting the school office in advance so we can either answer your query that way or make arrangements to meet you in an appropriate location away from other children or adults.

Hygiene measures while at school

The most important things we can all do while at school to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission are to do with hygiene. The most common way infection is transmitted is by people getting it on their hands and then touching their face. In order to deal with this risk, we will be asking everyone at school, children and adults alike, to wash or sanitise their hands at frequent points during the school day. This will include immediately on arrival, in case any infection has been picked up on the way in to school, and then frequently throughout the day. We are aware that some children, especially younger ones, need some support to wash their hands really thoroughly and we will of course make sure that support is provided.

Secondly, all frequently touched contact points, such as taps, door locks and flush handles in the toilets, continue to be kept clean during the school day.





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Thirdly, we will need to be very careful about any coughing or sneezing, as germs can easily be spread in this way. As we explain below, children with a new, persistent cough should not be sent to school. However, if a child coughs or sneezes during the day we will need them to use a clean tissue and to dispose of it in the bins provided immediately afterwards. It would be very helpful if parents and carers can reinforce this message and practise always using a tissue when coughing or sneezing when at home. Please ensure your child has tissues in their pockets when coming to school. Whilst we have tissues in school, they are not as easily accessible as a child's own pocket.

The school building will continue to be well ventilated and we have considered carefully how we minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing whenever possible. Staff who work within the school building will continue to take asymptomatic tests at home twice a week, as they have been since January 2021. This allows staff to determine if they have COVID-19 even if they have no symptoms, and then self-isolate accordingly.

Primary aged children are NOT going to be tested in this way as they may find the process unpleasant.

Face coverings in school

Government advice is clear that children in primary school do not need to wear a face covering at any point.

Visors *may* be worn by staff when teaching. However, face masks will be worn by all staff when moving around the school in communal areas where maintaining social distancing is harder.

Not coming to school if symptomatic

We are asking parents to continue to be very vigilant for any signs of infection in their children, and should they occur, **not to send the child to school**. The symptoms to look out for are a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of sense of smell or taste. Should **any** of these occur, you must keep your child at home and book a test via [Get a free NHS test to check if you have coronavirus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-test-nhs.uk), or by [contacting the NHS on their free-phone number of 119](https://119.nhs.uk).

If children develop any of these symptoms while in school, we will need to send them home immediately. We will need your support as parents or carers to manage this. A child who develops symptoms which could be COVID-19 will immediately be removed from other children in their class bubble and supervised safely until they can be collected.

As before, children must not come to school if a member of the household (including someone in their support or childcare bubble) has COVID-19 symptoms or have had a positive test for coronavirus. This period of self-isolation lasts for at least 10 days from the day after the start of symptoms or following the notification from NHS Track and Trace. Children should not have come into contact with others outside of these bubbles as all families should be following the current lockdown guidelines from central government.

Remote learning will be enabled for children who can't attend school because they are self-isolating or shielding because they are clinically extremely vulnerable.





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What will happen if someone tests positive

Just as we have done throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in the unlikely event that someone, either child or teacher, tests positive for COVID-19, we will immediately contact our local NHS Public Health Team. We will give them, and the Test and Trace service, the information they need to identify the risks that others may have become infected, and we will follow their instructions immediately about containing that risk. This may involve closing class bubbles and returning to a ten-day period of remote learning, depending on the advice received.

Reducing contacts

In school we will be taking a number of measures to ensure that if we did get a case of COVID-19 we would be able to contain it without it impacting on a large number of people. The “bubble” arrangements, with which families are familiar, will continue. When children are in class, they are obviously with only their own class, and are generally sitting down in the same place all the time. This means that if we should get a case we can easily identify who else may be at risk. However, at play time and lunch time children will need to move around. To reduce the chance of someone passing infection to large numbers of other children, we have staggered break and lunchtimes so that children will remain in their class bubble groups playing in separated areas on the playgrounds and field.

As was necessary from September, our usual collective worship and lunchtimes will not take place in the school hall. This is to avoid bringing children into close proximity with children from other groups. Instead, we will be having collective worship in children’s own classrooms using Microsoft Teams.

Lunch arrangements

We shall be returning to the arrangements we had in place before Christmas. Children may choose to bring a packed lunch to school or order a hot meal from the kitchen. Lunch will be eaten in the classrooms under the supervision of a midday supervisor and obviously each class bubble will also spend time outside.

The menu from Caterlink is attached to this letter and you will notice that next week will be Week 3. If your child is in KS2 and you wish them to have a hot dinner on any day, then please make sure your Caterlink account is topped up to ensure sufficient funds are available – **particularly if you are already carrying a debt.**

What we will be teaching

Families will likely have been aware of press coverage about the gaps in learning emerging because of the lockdown. Our experience from the first lockdown, and return to school in September, is that for most children most of the gaps in learning were already reducing by Christmas. Nevertheless, some children may need some support in catching up on their learning following an extended period not at school. Once more, teachers and teaching assistants will quickly assess the children’s learning and determine exactly where extra help is needed and will do all we can to provide the support. We will communicate with parents individually to keep you informed and give you ideas on how you can support this.





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Perhaps a better phrase than 'catch-up' is 'recovery'. Children have missed out on so much more in addition to their academic learning. It is one of the reasons we are all looking forward so much to us all being back together.

The first lockdown and subsequent return to school saw staff supporting children's wellbeing – their mental and physical health – and this remains an important focus for us going forwards. We will be supporting children in readjusting to school life and will of course be available to talk with you as parents or with children if there is a need to do so. We will aim to strike a good balance between acknowledging everything that has been happening and talking to children about the pandemic on the one hand, but also focussing on getting back to a normal school life on the other. Families with specific concerns should contact their class teacher in the first instance.

PE

On days when your child has PE they should come to school in their PE kit to remove the need for changing in school. PE days for each class are as follows:

Monday: Willow (Year 5), Cherry (Year 2) and Chestnut (Year R)

Tuesday: Ash (Year 6) and Oak (Year 4)

Wednesday: Mulberry (Year 3) and Lime (Year 1)

Thursday: Daisy (KS2 Language Centre)

Friday: Poppy (KS1 Language Centre)

Breakfast Club

Breakfast Club will operate as normal from 8:00am on Monday 8th March. Anyone who wishes to book their child into Breakfast Club in the first week should email the school office with the dates they wish to attend by **Thursday of this week**. Please title your email '**Breakfast Club Booking.**' Payment for Breakfast Club should be made through ParentMail as normal. Any parent wishing to use the Breakfast Club provision for the first time should mention this in their email and the office will set up your ParentMail account accordingly.

Afterschool Club

Our Afterschool Provision is run by Premier Education and this will also restart on Monday 8th March. Those families who have previously used the provision will be contacted directly by Premier Education. Further information will be sent out via ParentMail later this week for new families who may wish to book their children into this after-school provision moving forward.

We very much hope this letter gives you the reassurance you will rightly want that we have planned the return to school very carefully. We have followed the government guidance we have received closely and taken every step to reduce risk for all in our school community. We are confident that we are ready to reopen for all children once again on March 8th and are all very much looking forward to having all children in school.





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Finally, thank you for all the supportive emails and messages you have shared with the staff team over the most recent lockdown. Whether you have been engaging with remote learning, or your child has been attending school, your encouragement has been greatly received.

We look forward to seeing all families on Monday March 8th.

Yours sincerely,

Mr D Rye
Acting Headteacher



West Malling Primary School is part of The Tenax Schools Trust which is an exempt charity and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 07542155. The registered office is at Culverden Down, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9SH