



St Thomas' CE VA Primary School FAQs

1. Which year groups are returning to school?

The Government has asked primary schools to welcome back children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, alongside priority groups.

Having taken advice from the Local Authority, we have opted to take a cautious approach to reopening school which will involve a phased return, with Year 6 and Reception beginning their return on Thursday 11th June, Year 1 beginning on Monday 15th June. These will not be full time places.

We are hoping, if we have space and staff, to introduce other year groups back into school before the summer holidays.

2. Why aren't all the children coming back?

The DfE has based this on the need to reduce the rate of transmission of the virus. Therefore they have place limits on the number of children we can have in each 'bubble'. This affects the number of children that we can have in school in total. They have also advised that we have a gradual reopening of school and this is the model we are following. Each bubble will have 2 days per week in school so we can offer some time in school before the summer holidays to most children depending on the number of priority places taken.

3. If one of my children is eligible to return, can their sibling come back too?

Only if the year group the sibling is in is able to return. This will depend on overall numbers of children and staff as well as classrooms.

4. Does my child have to attend?

We appreciate that this is a difficult and personal decision. All children in the selected groups are encouraged to attend unless self-isolating or shielding. Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools will not be held to account for attendance levels. No one with symptoms should attend for any reason.

5. I am worried that my child or a family member is vulnerable. Should I send my child back to school?

Children and young people who are considered **extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding** should continue to shield and should not be expected to attend.

Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A minority of children will fall into this category, and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

Children and young people who live in a household with someone who is **extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding** should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and the child or young person is able to understand and follow those instructions.

Children and young people who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) as defined in the **social distancing guidance** and including those who are pregnant, can attend. DfE May 2020

6. How big will the bubbles be?

The DfE is recommending class group size should not exceed 15 pupils per small group and one teacher plus a TA depending on the age of the children. Desks should be as far apart as the room allows.

Having completed audits and risk assessments, we will have pods of approximately 15 pupils as we believe that this is what our setting can safely accommodate.

7. How will you guarantee that social distancing takes place e.g. keeping children 2 metres apart?

We will of course do our best to support distancing, but parents must understand that in returning to school it is possible that children will touch adults and one another and come into close contact. The nature of the school site and the age of our children is such that this is unavoidable and we cannot be expected to respond to complaints around this when it inevitably happens. We cannot alleviate every risk and parents must understand what we are able to do and use this to inform their decision-making.

8. How do I explain social distancing to my child?

Be open and honest, using language they will understand. Explain that they are helping others by their actions. Use drawings if needed and use a positive tone. Try to make the children feel safe.

There are some great stories and simple explanations to help:

Time to Come In, Bear: A Children's Story About Social Distancing

https://youtu.be/DA_SsZFYw0w

How to Explain Social Distancing to Kids

<https://youtu.be/2HTA3ql6uWY>

For very young children who may not understand the concept of viruses and germs, this video from Sesame Street's Grover is a great way to show them the “good” and “bad” of being far away and too close up to someone.

Grover and Social Distancing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOrt8WMwVEo#action=share>

9. What hygiene measures will be in place to keep my child safe?

We will

- follow the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#)
- ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available. Where a sink is not nearby, provide hand sanitiser in classrooms and other learning environments
- clean surfaces that children and young people are touching, such as toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, bannisters, more regularly than normal
- ensure that all adults and children:
 1. frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly
 2. clean their hands on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing
 3. are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
 4. use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it')
 5. ensure that help is available for children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
 6. consider how to encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
- ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
- where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows) or ventilation units
- prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation

10. Will children be confined to the same classroom environment most of the day?

Government advice on the Scientific evidence shows that the outdoor environment is much more manageable in terms of virus transmission. With good weather we will make the most of an outdoor learning approach, where possible. However outside of this we will keep children where possible within one set classroom for the day. This is why children need to wear practical clothing to school.

11. How will lunchtime work to ensure children are safe?

The school will run a staggered lunchtime to maintain as much spacing outside. Lunches will return as the Government has requested: "schools are expected to reopen their kitchens and ensure that meals are able to be prepared and served safely". Free School Meal children will continue to receive vouchers if they are not attending school.

12. How will you make school safe for my child?

In addition to social distancing and hygiene measures mentioned above, we will

- give children a designated classroom and group (which we are going to refer to as their bubble) for lessons and play, to minimise the opportunity for mixing
- regular cleaning of the setting and resources will take place

- not allow children to bring in their own resources, such as pencil cases, bags, PE kits
- use PPE such as gloves, aprons, masks, visors, hand sanitiser and anti-bac wipes as identified in our Risk assessments
- confine resources to rooms to minimise sharing and, when sharing is essential, clean resources before transference
- organise lunchtimes and playtimes differently
- carry out a corridor protocol – one way system and keep clear corridor spaces as far as is practical to allow maximum width space for walking
- be vigilant in identifying children with symptoms, isolate them and ask parents to collect them
- remove unnecessary items from classrooms
- remove soft furnishing, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean

13. Will my child be expected to share resources, such as pens and pencils?

Where possible, children will be given their own equipment, which they must not share with anyone else. They must not bring any equipment in from home. Any resources that are shared (e.g. school laptop) will be thoroughly disinfected after use.

14. I'm a critical worker and my child has been in the childcare provision throughout. My child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6, what will happen to them?

Your child will join their year group and we would encourage them to attend school on their allocated day.

15. I'm a key worker and I have only needed my Year 1 child to access school childcare for 2 days a week up to now. Do they have to attend every day when school opens more widely?

As your child's year group are returning to school it would be beneficial for your child to be in on the days allocated to their class so they can reconnect with year group staff and their classmates.

16. My child is in the critical worker provision currently but isn't in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Can they still come to school?

Key worker children will continue to come to school. They will be in a separate 'bubble'.

17. Will everyone arrive at school at the same time, causing an increase in risk?

The school will organise a staggered drop off and collection time for pupils. All pupils will be collected by staff at the main gate. The approach to school will be marked out with a 2-metre queue and drop off zone from where the teacher will invite pupils in. We will be familiar with the queuing systems from visits to the supermarket.

Only one parent or carer should accompany the child to school to minimise risk. Parents will not be invited to enter school but will drop off as described above, at the main gate.

18. Will the school have assembly/acts of worship?

Little groups will have an opportunity for reflection within their daily session, but there will be no mass gatherings or daily acts of worship as a school.

19. My child is feeling anxious about coming back to school. How can I prepare him/her?

You will need to prepare your child by talking about what school was like and what it will be like now. It will be different. For our youngest children, Mrs Hadfield has produced a video where she shows what a classroom in Early Years looks like.

Sharing social stories can be really helpful for young children and help to express the situation in a clear, factual way, reducing emotional responses.

It will be important to encourage your child to talk about their experiences in 'lockdown' and that this period is now ending.

20. Will children go straight back into normal lessons following the national curriculum?

No.

The initial focus will be on supporting personal, social, health and emotional aspects of learning to support children's wellbeing.

We will of course ensure that skills in English and Maths continue to be developed. Learning in school will follow the same topic-based approach as home learning has done up to this point.

21. How will you support my child's emotional wellbeing?

In addition to that mentioned above, a team of staff will be available to provide support. Our staff, SENCO and Learning Mentor will all work to ensure that children's needs are met.

There will be plenty of opportunities for children to discuss their feelings, play, rebuild friendships and have 'break out' or 'chill out' spaces for times when they may feel overwhelmed. We will continue to use our Learning Jungle and our values of being resilient, working cooperatively, continuous improvement, being curious and concentrating to support children's learning.

22. Will staff and children wear masks or PPE?

The Government guidelines state, "The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including:

- children, young people and students 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
- In order to support our staff who, like other members of the public, we will allow staff who wish to, wear face masks or visors
- 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 fluid-resistant surgical face mask and/or visor 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 disposable gloves, a disposable apron and a fluid-resistant surgical 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.

However at the moment school's thinking is that this is an individual family and staff member decision. If parents or staff insist on wearing face masks, we will not prohibit them from doing so, apart from when it becomes a danger to the child. Parents will need to exercise their own judgement around this and **MUST** understand that we cannot guarantee that your child will keep a mask on or wear it properly and should be able to put it on and off themselves. If parents wish their child to wear a face mask, they must provide these themselves.

23. Will my child need to wear a school uniform?

Pupils will not be required to wear school uniform at school during this time. Pupils can wear their own clothes at school, provided they adhere to the school rules on non-uniform clothing. The shoulders and torso must be completely covered (e.g. no vests, crop tops, or low-necked shirts), and shorts and skirts must be to the knee or below.

We ask that all children come to school in clean clothes every day. Please also ensure that all long hair is tied back.

24. Will the Breakfast Club and After School Club be open?

Not to begin with. We cannot provide enough staff to maintain the 'bubbles' that the children are in during the day.

25. Will we allow visitors and volunteers into school?

No, until the situation is deemed to be safe, we would prefer to minimise additional adults coming in and out of school. (Thank you to all those who have offered your help.)

26. Will extra-curricular clubs run (football club, dance club etc.)?

No, unfortunately, not at this time

27. I am currently receiving Edenred free school meal vouchers but my child is returning to school. Will I continue to do so?

No, you will no longer be entitled to a voucher, as your child will be able to have a school dinner for free.

28. Will the school office be open?

Yes, but sometimes there may be a reduced staff. This is a very busy time of year with new admissions and leavers. Please bear with us in the office and try to be as organised as possible. Where possible I would ask that parents ring/email the school as opposed to presenting in person. There will be a box outside the main office to drop off anything you need to hand in.

Letters for administering medication and applying for term time absence are available to download via our school website.

29. Will you continue to provide online home learning activities for children who do not return to school?

We will continue to set home learning activities, during term-time, so that all children have access to provision to support their learning. These will be what the children in school are working on anyway. With school reopening to a greater number, parents will need to be mindful that teaching staff will not be as responsive to parent emails during the time children are within school and indeed will need to shut off out of hours. Please understand that we have multiple learning opportunities to plan for and comparisons with the provision of other school settings and demographics are unfair and unhelpful.

30. Will children and young people be eligible for testing for the virus?

The Government advice is:

When settings open to the wider cohort of children and young people, all those children and young people eligible to attend, and members of their households, will have access to testing if they display symptoms of Covi-19. This will enable them to get back into childcare or education, and their parents or carers to get back to work, if the test proves to be negative. To access testing parents will be able to use the 111 online coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is aged under 5. Government guidance on this appears to change regularly so it is worth phoning your GP's automated telephone service as well.

31. Will teachers and other staff be able to get tested if they have symptoms?

Yes, access to testing is already available to all essential workers. This includes anyone involved in education, childcare or social work – including both public and voluntary sector workers, as well as foster carers.

32. What will happen if a child in the class shows symptoms?

We will follow the Government guidelines set out below.

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in an education or childcare setting, they must be sent home and advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance](#).

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else. PPE should be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very

young child or a child with complex needs). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves (and in which case, a test is available) or the child subsequently tests positive (see ‘What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting?’ below). They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#).

33. What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in school?

We will follow the Government guidance set out below.

When a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Where the child, young person or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or bubble within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England’s local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

34. What if my child has Covid type symptoms but it turns out to be something else?

If your child has Covid symptoms we will follow the guidance above. If your child, having been tested, does not appear to have the virus but continues with symptoms, please ask for a GP appointment. We will need confirmation via a test or advice given by your GP that will account for your child’s symptoms.

Please do not return your child to school if they are unwell, whatever the reason.

35. Will the school take my child’s temperature every day?

Yes, we will use a non-invasive infra-red thermometer which points to the forehead for all staff and children on entry to school.

36. Will there be any swimming lessons or trips once school opens more widely?

No. There are no plans to take the children out of the school grounds until further notice.

37. How can I speak to the class teacher if we are socially distancing?

You can contact your child's class teacher using Dojo. If you are unable to do this, you can email the office who will then pass the message on. In Reception, please email or telephone the school office. There will be a member of staff on the gate each morning to take messages.

38. What should my child bring to school each day?

We do not want your child to bring anything into school with them other than a lunch box and water bottle if they eat packed lunches.

Please check that they are labelled prominently. Staff will not be able to spend time searching for missing bottles or items of clothing.

Please do not bring PE kit, rucksacks, book bags or pencil cases.

39. Where can I find more information about returning to school?

The Government information is provided here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

We have endeavoured to answer all potential questions, however if you have any further questions please email paul.campen@st-thomasheaton.stockport.sch.uk (Infants), louise.loynes@st-thomasheaton.stockport.sch.uk (Juniors) or headteacher@st-thomasheaton.stockport.sch.uk.

Thank you