



Questions and answers for parents
Provisional planning for Year 6 pupils returning on site during the second half of the Summer term
Version dated 23rd May 2020

Introductory points

- This is a first version of what is very much a dynamic working document. An updated and revised version will be published for parents prior to any start date. Future versions may include more detail and there will be additional documents which will be shared with pupils and parents at the appropriate time.
- Government guidance is changing almost daily which means that our planning is in a constant state of flux.
- This document and other related planning documents and decisions being made by the School relate specifically and solely to the possible return to school of Year 6 pupils in June 2020. Planning for more pupils to be on site (e.g. additional year groups) in June 2020 would be a different situation and would require different measures to be taken by the School.
- With regard to boarders, Mrs Wells, our Head of Boarding, has been discussing the situation with parents on an individual basis and is in close contact with Mr Edwards. The Boarding Schools Association issued updated guidance on 22nd May regarding the safe return of boarders, and we are taking this into consideration as we communicate with our Year 6 boarding families.

There is a lot of government guidance issued to help schools in this situation. Which guidance is most relevant to parents?

The government has published a Q and A document for parents and carers which you should read. This school Q and A document will not repeat information already provided by the Government Qs and As.

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

Will it actually go ahead?

At the moment, the Government has asked schools to make provisional plans, but Year 6 pupils will not be returning until the Government has given further confirmation that it is safe to go ahead.

Does Taunton Prep School necessarily have to follow government guidance in relation to the return of Year 6 pupils?

It would be difficult for the School to deviate significantly from government guidance in this situation unless it has very strong grounds to do so. Any deviation leaves the School at risk of being challenged either now or retrospectively. In addition, we are mindful that the Government has referred to it being 'the duty of schools' to assist the country in taking early and careful steps to come out of total lockdown.

When might be the first day back on site for Year 6 pupils?

The Government has said that it will be June 1st at the earliest but that it will give further confirmation. It has been reported in the press that May 28th is a likely date for further confirmation. Even if the Government confirms its request, and sets June 1st as the start date, we would not consider it safe for us to have pupils onsite on June 1st. For the first few days after half term, we would need to digest all communication issued by the Government between now and then, and review our policies, risk assessments, protocols and procedures (which are all currently in draft form). We would also need to communicate salient information to pupils, parents and staff, and spend time on staff training. We cannot commit now to a start date, but it would be June 3rd at the earliest when we would consider it sufficiently safe for us to welcome pupils back on site. It may be later than June 3rd. The most important thing is that, whenever pupils do return on site, it is well organised, calm and as safe as it can be for pupils and staff; there is no need for it to be rushed, and it should not be rushed.

Why Y6 and not Y8? What about Years 3, 4, 5 and 7?

Please see the letter from Mr Edwards to parents dated 22nd May 2020.

Would Taunton School give guidance to parents as to whether they should send their child into school?

We do not wish to add anything to the Government's Guidance for Parents which states that "we strongly encourage children and young people in the eligible year groups and priority groups (such as children of critical workers) to attend, as requested by their school or college, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions). You should notify your child's school or college as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware and can discuss with you."

What would Taunton Prep School's view be if parents wish to keep their child at home?

We would fully respect and understand a decision by parents not to send their child into school, irrespective of whether there are shielding issues.

What proportion of the Year 6 pupils would we be expecting to come into school?

On 23rd May 2020, we asked parents to give us an indication of whether they would send their child into school or not. If anecdotal figures from other comparable prep schools (which finish at Year 8) are anything to go by, between 30% and 70% of parents are likely to indicate that they would send their children into school.

What would the school day timings be? Would my child be able to spend part of the day in school?

We are provisionally planning for timings to stay essentially as they are now. Morning registration would take place just before 8.20am and we would ask for pupils to be dropped off between 8am and 8.20am. The fact that we would have different drop-off locations for each form would provide for social distancing. Pick-up time would be between 3.30pm and 4pm, but with the option of staying until 5pm. We are not planning on parents being able to drop off or pick up at any other time of day, unless there are special reasons for doing so.

If my child doesn't come into school, what changes would there be to the educational experience which he/she has been receiving during the first half of the summer term?

Our intention would be for there to be little change for pupils not in school. They would be working to a very similar timetable as they are now, with lessons taught in predominantly the same way and by the same teachers. Aspects other than the lesson-based teaching and learning (e.g. pastoral care, co-curricular activities, assemblies etc.) would also stay predominantly the same. Feedback from our surveys tells us that our remote learning is working very well for the vast majority of pupils and parents. We would not want to jeopardise this for pupils who are at home.

What would happen if, with pupils back on site, a pupil or a member of staff were to develop symptoms of COVID-19?

If anyone develops a fever, or a new continuous cough, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they should not come into school. If these symptoms first become apparent whilst a person is in school, they will be cared for onsite by our medical team and leave the site as soon as is practicably possible. They will then be advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance](#) (which states that the ill person should remain in isolation for 7 days and the rest of the household in isolation for 14 days).

According to the current guidance, and subject to advice at the time from Public Health England, all other pupils and staff (assuming that they are not members of the affected person's household) would be able to continue coming into school. We would not publicise to pupils/parents/staff that someone has developed symptoms (see below, however, for confirmed cases).

What would happen if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19?

The Guidance for Parents states that 'Where the child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class/group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days'. We would need to follow the advice of Public Health England for every individual case, but the current guidance suggests that pupils and staff who are not classified as being within the same class/group would be able to carry on coming into school.

Would there be a risk of my child becoming infected with COVID-19 during their time in school?

The Government guidance says that 'protective measures will be put in place for staff and pupils to help limit the risk of the virus spreading'. It is impossible to eliminate all risk.

One of the 'protective measures' specified by the Government is limiting the amount of contact between different groups of children? How would the school do this for Year 6?

Our plans are subject to change, depending on numbers and other factors, but we are provisionally planning to group pupils in their forms (6K, 6S, and 6T). They may not be in their usual Form room. There would be more than one classroom available for each form, if numbers require it, in order to reduce the number of pupils per room. The classroom(s) (and the toilets) for each Form would be physically distanced from those assigned to the other forms in order to minimise contact and mixing. Two members of staff would be allocated to each form and would work on a rota to provide the required supervision. For the purposes of this document, let us call each form group a 'bubble' (including the two members of staff). In Year 6, we would therefore have 3 'bubbles' and we would do all that we can to avoid contact between members of each 'bubble'. Should one of the pupils or a member of staff in one of those 'bubbles' test positive, it would therefore only be the other pupils and staff in that 'bubble' which would need to go home and self-isolate for 14 days (subject to guidance from Public Health England at the time).

Which members of staff would be supervising my child's form group?

Virtually all of our teachers are fully deployed delivering remote learning to classes in different year groups and cannot therefore supervise Year 6 pupils (this includes the current Year 6 Form Tutors). We are, however, fortunate in having a pool of committed and very able professionals who would be coming into school to supervise the Year 6 pupils and children of critical workers in other year groups. This pool includes teachers, sports coaches, matrons, and GRAs. All of these staff would do a good job in providing the required supervision and there would be a member of the Senior Management Team on site every day to provide support. The supervising staff would be happy to do their best to help pupils who encounter problems in their work, but they may not have the knowledge or expertise to resolve every work query (in which case pupils can communicate online with their subject teacher or Form Tutor).

What would this bubble system mean for the educational provision for pupils in school?

Because of the need to create 'bubbles', it would not be possible for all of e.g. 6K's teachers to be coming into 6K's classroom(s). It would also not be possible for pupils to move from their form group into their setted groups (in Maths, English and French). Pupils would therefore be doing their teaching and learning in the same way as they have been doing at home during the first half of term. We have sufficient i-pads for each pupil (one per pupil), and pupils would be welcome to bring into school the laptops, tablets or other devices which they have been using at home. We would not, however, want pupils bringing in their mobile phones. Pupils would need to bring their own headphones into school.

What about 'extra lessons' (e.g. Individual music lessons? One-to-one lessons from our Educational Progress teachers)?

Where possible, these lessons would continue at the same time as they have been running during the first half of term. If this were to prove difficult for any reason, then the pupil (or his/her parents) should contact the relevant member of staff and the school would do all that it reasonably could in order to resolve the issue.

What things would the children be able to do in school which they are currently not able to do at home?

- We would do what we could to give pupils a positive and enjoyable time in school (examples of this may include sport, performing arts etc). The activities which we would be able to do in school would change over time according to changing official guidance. In brief, we would aim to 'start small' and build the experience as the situation allows.
- For example, we are currently unable to plan for the use of the swimming pools or indoor sports facilities, but it may be possible to do some sort of tennis and cricket within the restrictions outlined by the Government and National Governing Bodies of individual sports. There is currently no guidance allowing team cricket, although some one-to-one activity in nets may be possible.
- Working in the same classroom with other pupils in their form
- Spending break-times with pupils in their form

Would it be possible for the school to guarantee that pupils and staff keep their distance from each other at all times?

The short answer is 'No'. There is some ambiguity in the Government guidance on this point and the following statements have been made by the Government:-

- "We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account."

- “It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups”
- “Where settings can keep children and young people in those small groups 2 metres away from each other, they should do so. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk.”

In brief, pupils should not come within 2 metres of anyone outside of their own bubble. However, it is impossible for us to guarantee that pupils will not come within 2 metres of pupils or staff within their own bubble. The important thing would be for us to give to pupils and staff expectations which are as clear as possible in order to reduce anxiety and worry, and to ensure a sensible reduction of the risk of spreading the virus. We know that this is one of the details which is currently being looked at by the Government and it is to be hoped that further official guidance would appear before pupils came onto site.

What would be the other main ‘protective measures’ taken to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus?

We would follow government guidance and give particular focus to the following:-

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

Public Health England (PHE) is clear that if schools do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered. All of these measures form part of our risk assessment and protocols.

Would it be possible for the school to eliminate the risk of coming into contact with somebody who has symptoms?

In short, the answer to this question is ‘no’. However, we would be able to reduce the risk of this by giving regular reminders to all pupils, staff and visitors that, by coming onto the site, they are effectively declaring that they are, to the best of their knowledge, free of symptoms. Each of the bubbles will have their temperatures taken when they arrive in school every morning, when pupils will be reminded about the rules regarding behaviour, social distancing and hygiene.

Would pupils or staff be wearing clinical facemasks, face coverings or other PPE?

The government guidance states that “Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended” and that “Schools and other education or childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings”. It also says that masks worn for clinical reasons “should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission”.

Our current view on this issue is as follows:-

- With regard to clinical face masks, these need careful fitting and handling and should not be worn by any pupil or staff without prior discussion with our medical professionals in the Health Centre.
- With regard to non-clinical face coverings (including home-made ones), we would not be recommending that pupils wear these and we would not anticipate many pupils wearing them. However, if a pupil wanted to wear a face covering, this would be allowed, but he/she would need to ensure that it is managed in a way which is safe for them and for others.

PPE other than face masks or face-coverings would not be worn by staff unless they are involved in direct personal care for someone who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19. Parents would need to inform the School if care for their child routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs.

Would there be medical professionals on site during the school day?

Yes. Our Medical Centre would be open and manned by trained staff.

How would the school manage the well-being, mental health, and happiness of pupils (and staff)?

This would remain paramount and we are aware that the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils (and staff). We have been reviewing key policies including those relating to Behaviour, Discipline, Pastoral Care, Anti-

Bullying, Safeguarding and the Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural development of the pupils, and we will continue to do so. We are aware that pupils coming back onto site would be returning to a very different experience to the one which they are used to. We are also aware that it would be different for pupils not in school to know that some of their peers were in school. Some children will return to school having been exposed to a range of adversity including bereavement and long term anxiety. This may lead to an increase in social, emotional and mental health concerns.

How would the school manage pupil behaviour and discipline?

It is important for schools to be calm and disciplined environments, where everyone follows the rules. Before having pupils back on site, we would update the behaviour policy to reflect the new rules and protocols. This would need to include appropriate consequences (such as sanctions and rewards), so that staff could ensure pupils understand them and could enforce them rigorously.

How would the school manage safeguarding?

Mr Burnett would continue to be the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the whole school and Mrs Hall-Tomkin would continue to be the Child Protection Lead for the Prep School. We have many staff who are trained to the level required to be a Designated Safeguarding Lead (including Mr Coleman, Mrs Hall-Tomkin, Mr Glaser, Mr Edwards and others) and there would always be one person qualified to that level available on site.

Would the school transport be running?

We would ask parents to read the Government guidance relating to travel to and from school ([Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)). The Government has stated that we should 'reduce any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport where possible' and our usual school transport would not be running.

How would drop-off and pick-up work?

We would follow government guidance including:-

- Telling parents and pupils their allocated drop off and collection times and the process for doing so, including protocols for minimising adult to adult contact (for example, which entrance to use).
- Asking parents not to gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the inner Prep School site (unless they have a pre-arranged appointment, which should be conducted safely).
- Telling parents that if their child needs to be accompanied to the education or childcare setting, only one parent should attend.

Specific information from the school for parents in each of the bubbles would be communicated at the appropriate time.

Would cooked lunches be available?

For a number of operational and safety-related reasons, we would not be opening up our kitchens and dining halls. Pupils would therefore need to bring in a packed lunch and a drink bottle. The water fountains would be available and we would be providing a snack at morning break-time and at the end of afternoon lessons.