



ST MARY'S Catholic Primary School

Melbourn Road, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7DB Tel: (01763) 246021

20 October 2020

Dear Parents

As we approach half term I wanted to update you following a detailed review of our COVID specific procedures which have been in operation since the start of term.

We are operating in ever-changing challenging times. To ensure we follow up-to-date guidance, regularly review our risk assessments and keep our school COVID secure, I meet weekly with a working group of governors, John Williams Chair of Governors, Ben Timms Vice-chair of Governors and Karen O'Sullivan Safeguarding and SEND governor. All the decisions that we make are based on the safety and the best interests of our children and staff.

I am extremely grateful to the governors for their time and commitment in helping me navigate through this difficult situation. In line with our Trust schools we have reviewed our procedures taking into account government guidance, risk assessments, logistics and parental views.

Hot lunches

We are delighted that hot lunches have been well received; children are enjoying them and this has worked well logistically. Our thanks to all the staff for their co-operation in implementing the necessary cleaning and procedures for this to work safely. The new system has actually reduced the time it takes for the children to eat their lunch which has given them more time to play. Thanks also to our catering team Claire and Lauren. The hot lunches will continue after half term with a new menu which I am sure the children will enjoy. If your child would like to move from a packed lunch to a school meal please get in touch with the office.





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Drop offs and pick ups

Staggered drop-off and collection has run smoothly thanks to parents and carers co-operation with following our procedures. Now that everyone is familiar with the new process we have reviewed the morning drop-off times and I am pleased to be able to confirm that we are able to reduce the overall morning drop off time from 35 to 25 minutes by changing drop off for Year 4, Year 1 and Reception. Other classes will remain unchanged. The changes will be implemented after half-term as follows:

- Reception drop off will be 10 minutes earlier from 9.00-9.10am; collection times unchanged
- Year 1 drop off will be 10 minutes earlier from 9.00-9.10am; collection times unchanged
- Year 4 drop off will be 10 minutes earlier from 8.45-8.55am; collection times will be 10 minutes later from 3.10–3.20pm

This change will increase teaching time by 50 minutes for Year 1 and Reception and by 1 hour 40 minutes in Year 4; thereby aligning Year 4 with the rest of Upper KS2.

We have carefully considered the risks that this change presents for bubbles mixing and a busier car park. In order to mitigate these risks, we must ask you to walk if at all possible to reduce car traffic, be as punctual as possible and leave the school site promptly after drop off/collection, and adhere strictly to social distancing whilst queueing.

Friday afternoons

Finally, we reviewed early closure on Friday afternoon. As part of this review the governors felt it important that I outline to parents how the Friday afternoon is utilised by the teaching staff and why the children are not missing out on teaching time as a result of the early finish on Fridays.

Before COVID, when the school day ran to 3.15pm on a Friday, the majority of the Friday afternoon would be spent by all year groups undertaking a variety of activities which would include a whole school assembly, crafts and music and golden playtime (if the class had earned it that week). Generally primary school children are very tired by Friday afternoon so as a school we have avoided teaching core subjects at this time of the week.





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Since the children returned to school in September, we have ensured they received their required teaching time (23.5 hours KS2 and 21 hours KS1 EYFS) by condensing lunchtimes. Not only has this proved to be a more effective way of teaching the children but it also ensures that classes are taught by a qualified teacher and that teaching assistants are consistent in bubbles. As previously stated, the new drop off/collection for Year 4 will align their teaching time with Years 5 and 6.

In addition, the early closure on a Friday gives time, space and opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss pupil progress and special educational needs. These are vital discussions involving both internal and external professionals that would otherwise be difficult to co-ordinate under current restrictions (for example, staff are unable to cross bubbles to cover each other). Friday afternoons are also used by the teachers to plan their lessons for the following week as well as enabling the school to undergo a deep clean.

Please note that care is available free of charge Friday afternoon until 3.15pm if you are unable to collect your child at lunchtime. If your work schedules are not consistent and planning ahead is tricky we would recommend you book a place and cancel if not required, this also applies to breakfast and afterschool club.

In summary, our review has confirmed the necessity for Friday afternoon closure to remain and wrap around care to continue unchanged. Changes to Reception, Year 1 and Year 4 drop off and collection will be implemented from **Monday November 2nd**.

The COVID working group will continue to meet weekly to review school procedures and government advice. We will inform you if any further changes become necessary. In addition, a full review of our processes will take place again at the end of the Autumn term. In the meantime, we considered it was important to communicate in detail why we have implemented the processes we have and to try to be as open, transparent and clear in our decision making as possible.

Our priorities continue to be the safety of children and staff, keeping our bubbles open with safe levels of staffing and being able to deliver a high quality, broad and balanced curriculum.





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The governors and I really do appreciate that the current procedures can have significant impacts to your own arrangements during this challenging time and we thank you for the efforts you go to in order to support the school's focus on the best provision for our children. We are always open to your feedback, so if you would like to share your perspective with us the governors would readily receive it via email at governors-surveys@st-marys-royston.herts.sch.uk.

Thank you again for your ongoing co-operation and support.

God Bless.

Mrs Julia Pearce



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