

# New Forest Care Education

15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Firstly, and most importantly, I hope this letter finds you all safe and well.

I am writing to follow up on my last letter now the Government have published their roadmap to easing lockdown and the Department of Education (DfE) has published their guidance for schools.

The DfE documents, and much of the recent press coverage, focuses on Primary (Year R, Year 1 and Year 6) returning from 1<sup>st</sup> June with students facing key exams next year '*hopefully having face to face contact with their teachers before the summer*'. However, for New Forest School a key paragraph in the guidance gives us a different focus:

*Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools will work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups.*

We have obviously read through and considered the guidance in great detail and have subsequently been in contact with all parents/carers to discuss attendance from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Our standpoint remains this is a choice for parents/carers based on individual circumstances. The DfE have made it clear that **no parent/carer will be penalised** if they choose for their child to remain at home and as a school we will fully support you if this is the decision you make.

We are now aware of each parent/carers preference for your child's attendance from 1<sup>st</sup> June and are busy working on a detailed plan which I hope to be able to provide you with next week. However, I would like to share some of the key principles we are following and procedures we have in place based on risk assessments we have undertaken.

We have remained open throughout the lockdown period for Key Worker parents and since the Easter holidays for approx. 45% of our students. The plan and procedures we have followed have kept all staff and students free from infection so far. As such we intend to expand the current way of working to the additional students and additional staff returning. It is worth noting that everything we put in place from April onwards very closely matches what the DfE have subsequently published as guidance for all schools.

One additional aspect we have had to consider is those students who reside in one of our care homes being in contact with day students. Students from the care homes come into contact with a large number of our care staff over the course of the week whereas day students are limited in contact to just family members. Mixing these students could open an additional route of cross infection in a worst-case scenario therefore to date we have avoided mixing students from care homes with day students by both class group and school site and intend to maintain this.

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## Education



In order to protect all students/staff and their families our current plan and the revised plan for 1<sup>st</sup> June onwards will be based on the following:

1. Students will be assigned a fixed class group – this may not be with their normal class group/peers but this group will remain fixed for the foreseeable future.
2. Day students will not be put in the same class as students who reside in one of our care homes.
3. Students who reside in our care homes are placed in a class with only other students from their care specific care home.
4. Care home classes and day student classes will not attend the same school site.
5. Each class has a designated classroom or pair of classrooms where they will be taught whilst attending education.
6. Each class has a designated entrance to their classroom/s to minimise use of the same entrance to school by other students.
7. Each class has a designated toilet they will use when on school site – this toilet will not be used by any other students/staff.
8. Each class has 3 dedicated staff assigned to it – a teacher and two Teaching Assistants/pastoral staff – unless in exceptional circumstances they will not come into contact with other staff.
9. Where possible, dedicated staff working with students have been selected due to pre-existing relationships/knowledge of the students.
10. Where education staff have care contracts or undertake overtime work in care homes they have been assigned to the care home class from the home they are already working in and will not work with day students.
11. We are staggering drop off and pick up times by 15 minutes for each class to avoid students/staff having contact with students/staff from classes.
12. Breaktimes for outside play etc will be staggered with appropriate clean down of any items used during break.
13. Students will have their temperature taken and follow a hand washing routine on arrival at school.

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14. Each class room and toilet will have its own dedicated supply of hand washing materials, cleaning materials and waste disposal bin.
15. Additional PPE equipment will be available to staff teaching the students if required.
16. Additional rooms are available to self-isolate any student if they begin to display any symptoms whilst attending education.

Whilst these steps allow us to keep the situation as safe as possible for staff/students and their wider family groups, it does present other hurdles.

1. In order to maintain this level of social distancing between groups given the limited size/space of our sites we need to limit the number of classes on site at any given time. To achieve this, we have had to implement a part time timetable for students which will need to continue.
2. As class groups have fixed classrooms and fixed staff delivering all lessons students will not have access to specialist teachers for different subjects and specialist teaching rooms (e.g. D&T, Art, Music, Science).

As such, staff working with each group are delivering a reduced curriculum. In addition, as students are limited to small areas of the school for the entire day (with exception to outside breaks and PE lessons) we have asked staff to provide a mixture of academic lessons and social activities to break up the day.

This is not education as we know it. We are not able to provide a normal timetable, normal curriculum and normal lessons but my personal opinion is nor should we be. It is about engaging and supporting our students during some very difficult and worrying times whether they are attending school or working from home and providing enjoyable and accessible learning experiences whilst focusing as much on the students social and emotional health as academic progress.

For the students, this makes school a different place to normal. Whilst they will be in familiar surroundings, with familiar faces, their classes will be different and the staff working with them may not be teachers/TA's they normally work with. Their movement within school is restricted to a small area and all lessons/activities will take place in one classroom (more like a primary school setting). The day will start/finish at different times and they may only be attending for a lower number of days per week.

This is a significant change and for a number of our students, change is difficult for them to manage. As such I hope this lengthy email provides enough information for you to start preparing your child if they are returning on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. This is also why I am keen to provide the final plan as soon as possible next week so you are able to share specific details as soon as possible.

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Apologies for such a lengthy letter, however I believe it is important to share as much information as I can with you all at this stage. I will of course update you all with the more detailed plans early next week.

Kindest regards,



Duncan Smith  
Headteacher

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