

St Michael's C of E Primary, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill, Durham, DL17 9AL

T: 01740 651 482 / E: bishopmiddleham@durhamlearning.net

Executive Headteacher: Mrs L. Vollans

Head of School: Mrs B. Dawson

Assistant Headteacher: Mr J. Paley

Dear Parents / Carers,

We hope that you have had a great half term.

As you will be aware, the Government published their updated guidance, this week, around the changes they are making to the law for COVID. I have tried to outline the changes, based on the guidance we currently have. If there are further changes, we will continue to update and keep parents informed.

The advice on bubbles and mixing has been removed. Therefore, from Monday we will remove the bubble system in school. This will mean the children will eat dinner in the hall, have collective worship together and will be able to play together at break times.

We will have wrap around care available from 8am and until 4pm. This needs to be booked on Parent Pay. We ask that you book wrap around care on the Friday before by 3pm. If you need to book it in after this time, please e-mail or ring the school. From Monday, we will give the children toast for their breakfast. When dropping off, parents should bring their children to the main reception. On a night, the staff will bring the children up to the zebra crossing at 4pm.

The after school clubs will start again this week. If you haven't booked onto them please do so by clicking [here](#). We will confirm places on Monday 28th February. The after school clubs run until 4pm. If the children are doing a sports after school club, they should come into school dressed in their school PE kit.

The children who were doing intervention before half term will continue to do intervention this half term. This will start on Tuesday 1st March. The children should arrive at school at 8.30am. If they arrive late they will miss part of the intervention and will have to come through the main entrance. The children that are coming in for intervention should also wait at the zebra crossing until a member of staff collects them, at 8.30am.

From Monday, we will also remove the staggered start and finish times. Therefore, the children will come to school from 8.45am – 8.55am. The gates won't open before this time so please don't arrive early. The children should not come past the zebra crossing as this is where the staff will start letting them in from. The gates will close at 8.55am. If they arrive after this time, they will need to go through reception. The end of the school day will be 3.15pm for all children. We continue to ask parents to drop off and pick up from the zebra crossing.

This term the children will take part in two PE lessons rather than forest school. The children will continue to come into school dressed in their school PE Kit. There will be occasions where they will do forest school activities. We will inform you about this on the newsletter so please continue to check it for things that are happening in school.

Year Group	PE Day	
Nursery and Reception	Wednesday	Thursday
Year 1 /2	Monday	Tuesday
Year 3	Monday	Thursday
Year 4	Thursday	Friday
Year 5/6	Wednesday	Friday

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From 24 February guidance on close contacts and isolation is to be replaced by the UKHSA guidance. The below bullet points are from the plan for living with Covid:

- *"The public are encouraged to continue to follow public health advice, as with all infectious diseases such as the flu, to minimise the chance of catching Covid and help protect family and friends. This includes by letting fresh air in when meeting indoors, wearing a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet, and washing your hands."*
- *"Until 1 April, we still advise people who test positive to stay at home. Adults and children who test positive are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least five full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received two negative test results on consecutive days."*
- **From April, the Government will update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to be careful and considerate of others, similar to advice on other infectious diseases. This will align with testing changes."**

In relation to testing, we have only recommended that you test your child/ren when they have had symptoms. While the tests are freely available, we will continue to recommend this approach to protect children, staff and wider families linked to our school. We appreciate your ongoing support with this.

From the 24th February, the law changes and it is no longer a legal obligation to isolate. Instead, everyone should follow the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice. As we understand it, the UKHSA advice remains to isolate for five full days if an individual is showing symptoms. They should then have two negative tests before ending isolation (testing on day 5 and day 6). There is therefore no expected change in the advice.

For schools, this places COVID on the same level as the current policy in place for when children have other infectious or potentially infectious illnesses – such as Chicken Pox or vomiting/diarrhoea. These require children to be absent from school for a certain period of time and/or clear of symptoms for a fixed period of time before returning to school (for example, for vomiting/diarrhoea this is 48 hours clear).

As a school, we will continue to ventilate all spaces used by children and staff in school. Hygiene measures (hand washing and cleaning routines) will also remain in place.

I appreciate that the current changes may bring more questions than answers. Some families will be pleased to see the changes, while others will be extremely worried about what it means for them. As always, we will take a balanced approach, that aims to enable children to have all the opportunities we can provide, while keeping them as safe as we can.

I am proud of the way our school community, children, staff and parents - but particularly the children – have navigated the difficulties and challenges of the last two years, and I'm confident that whatever comes next, we will continue to show our school values in all we do to get through it all together.

Thank you for your understanding and support. As ever, if you have any specific concerns, please do get in touch and I will do my best to support you with them.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs L. Vollans
Executive Headteacher

Mrs B. Dawson
Head of School

Mr J. Paley
Assistant Headteacher