Dear Parent/Carer,

**Update on reopening St John of Jerusalem Primary School to more pupils**

I write this letter to give you an update on the arrangements we are making to open the school to more pupils, but first I want to thank you for your continued support and cooperation at this extremely challenging time.

**Thank you.**

Before I set out these arrangements, I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their understanding, patience and cooperation throughout the period since we closed the school to most pupils on 20 March.

I would also like to pay tribute to the school staff who have shown exceptional commitment and tireless dedication in recent months in planning and delivering home learning provision and resources for the pupils. The school has remained open for vulnerable children and those of keyworkers throughout the coronavirus pandemic. The school staff have continued to provide for their needs. We have made sure the most vulnerable families have been able to access food parcels, vouchers and other support.

**Reopening to more pupils**

You will be aware that, subject to satisfying its five tests, the Government has signalled its intention for schools to start readmitting pupils in certain school years, namely Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. St John of Jerusalem School is committed to ensuring that any such move is made in a safe way that gives confidence and reassurance to parents and carers. We are keen to see children back in the school, but only when it is safe to do so.

**A phased reopening**

We have decided to be cautious, and we are, therefore instigating a phased approach for pupils to return to school. This will allow us to get used to our new way of operating, and to make improvements in a controlled way. It will also ensure that we can concentrate on the specific needs of each year group as they return one at a time.

As things stand, we plan to invite pupils back into the classroom as follows:

* On Thursday 4 **June** the children of **key workers** and **vulnerable children** will return to school.
* The school will only open more widely when an effective test, track and trace system is embedded and shown to be working well; therefore being realistic, we do not envision **year 6** pupils to return to school **before** the **15 June.**
* We will continue to consult with staff, and **year 1** will only return to school if it is deemed safe, and not before **the 22 June**.
* At this time, we do not think it will be safe for the Reception and Nursery classes to return to school, as we do not consider the social distancing measures to keep them safe, are achievable. However, we will continuously evaluate the situation and will inform parents as soon as we feel that it is safe to bring the nursery and reception pupils back to school.

Unless there is a major change in the situation, we think it is unlikely that we will be reopening to any other year groups before the end of the summer term.

**Protective measures we are taking in light of coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The Department for Education has published support for parents and carers centred on the reopening of schools, providing information on key areas of concern as well as for school staff in preparing for the wider opening of schools from the 1 June. The information can be accessed from:<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Our overarching principle is that St John of Jerusalem School can only reopen to other pupils when it is safe to do so and not before. Along with our Governing Body, the senior team and I are planning for a gradual wider reopening of the school, but this will only happen when it is considered practical and safe to do so. Only once we can be sure that St John of Jerusalem School is safe for both children and staff will we be able to open to more children. The health and safety, and well being of your child, and of our staff, are our top priority.

A prerequisite of a broader school opening is for the headteacher to rigorously assess the risks posed for St John of Jerusalem School. I am therefore undertaking a thorough Health and Safety Risk Assessment to ensure that the relevant safety measures to limit the risk of coronavirus transmission are in place, to welcome more children back to school.

**Some of the steps we are taking in readiness for reopening include:-**

* Assessing the risks to pupils and staff based around the size and layout of the school buildings.
* Assessing the availability of staff.
* We are asking anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or who lives with someone who is presenting with symptoms, not to attend the school setting. That includes children and staff who work here.
* Keeping our children in small groups (maximum of 15) with as much consistent staffing as possible, and minimising contact with other groups around the school.
* Cleaning our hands more often than usual. We have routines to ensure that children understand how to clean their hands properly:
	+ 1. Thorough hand washing for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap.
	+ 2. Thorough drying of hands.
	+ 3. The application of alcohol gel or sanitiser, on dry hands.
* Ensuring our children understand 'what is good respiratory hygiene' by promoting the *'catch it, bin it, kill it'* approach, and providing a good supply of tissues and bins throughout the school.
* Implementing an enhanced cleaning schedule, ensuring surfaces touched by children and staff are cleaned regularly, and throughout the day, including table surfaces, door handles, and playing equipment.
* Asking parents and carers to physically distance from each other and from staff when dropping off and collecting their children, and to limit the drop-off and collection to one parent or carer per household.
* Asking children not to bring items from the home to the setting, unless this is essential to their health and wellbeing.
* Staggering break times, and pick-up and drop-off times
* Increased cleaning of the building

We do not know what the 'new normal' will look like in St John of Jerusalem School. I want you and your child to know that when they do return to the school, that my staff and I are working hard to ensure they return to a place of safety where risks are minimised, and learning can continue. I am unflinching in my commitment that your children get the best possible care and education at St John of Jerusalem School.

**Testing out measures put in place**

During the first half of the summer term, the vulnerable and critical worker children have continued to be educated at St Paul's with St Michael CoE primary school, with our staff in attendance. From the 1st June 2020, we will be returning to St John of Jerusalem School. We want to ensure that preventative measures and risk assessments that are put in place to minimise the risk to health and safety, and wellbeing of the children are working as planned, before considering opening the school to other year groups, safely.

We want to make sure the school is safe and protects staff as well as the pupils. To test and evaluate measures that we are putting in place, as already mentioned, we are taking a phased approach to start to admit more pupils. We will inform you when the next year group is likely to start; this will be the children from the year 6 class.

We will not be pressuring anyone to send their child to school since you know your children and personal situation best. Once you have all the information, you will be able to make an informed decision. The Government has made it clear they will not be fining parents for not sending children into school during this term. However, if you are supported by a social worker and your social worker advises that your child needs to attend school, you must follow this advice.

If your child is clinically extremely vulnerable or living with someone who is in this group, they should not come back to school and should continue home learning. If your child is clinically vulnerable, but not clinically extremely vulnerable, you should follow all the medical advice to decide if they should come back to school (please refer to government guidance below)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings#shielded-and-clinically-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

We ask all parents and carers to ensure they organise a test for their child, if they develop coronavirus symptoms, and notify us immediately of a positive test. Further guidance about getting tested is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

**Pupils not returning to school**

For pupils at home, we will continue to support you and your child with home learning, and meal support for those eligible. We will also keep in regular touch with the families of all pupils, whether or not they are attending school

Finally, I would like to reassure you that the health and safety and wellbeing of your child or children, and our staff, remain our top priority during this period. We are looking forward to welcoming your child or children back when it is safe to do so.

If you have any questions, please contact:

admin@st-johnjerusalem.hackney.sch.uk

Warm regards,

**Asarena Simon** (Headteacher) and

**Alister Bould** (Chair of Governors)