

Back to school

Our plans for the September return



MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD

Dear Parents

What a term! It has been a monumental effort from staff, parents and children to adapt the way we learn and I am so proud seeing everybody pull together.

Alongside this unique situation, Polam has seen some important staffing changes. We will remember the many achievements gained here at Polam under Mrs Harris' headship and fully intend to build on these going forward. Her leadership, guidance and passion have been paramount to Polam's success.

Navigating a school through a pandemic has been an interesting induction into headship. I would like to thank the staff for their unwavering dedication to do the very best for our students; parents for their fully supportive comments; and the children for, well, just being amazing as usual.

In the recent survey 98% of you agreed that both you as a family and your child benefited from going back to school, 96% agreed that the return to school process was well managed by the school, and 100% thought that every possible risk mitigation that the school could have taken was taken. Some of your positive comments are included at the back of this document. Thank you also for the ideas and requests some of you made as we turn our attention to September.

As you will know, the government have now released guidance for schools on which to base our planning for a full school reopening in September. I am fully confident that we are ready to reopen the school for all pupils and have outlined more details within this document on how this will be managed. I will continue to keep you informed of any guidance updates over the Summer.

One overall reflection I have is that I want Polam to preserve the best that came from this period – how staff adapted their educational methods, how we embraced a new way of doing things, how the students coped with uncertainty and change, and how we built a new and deeper relationship with you, our parents. We will, of course, be continuing with our enhanced cleaning regime next year and you can help by making regular hand washing a part of your daily routine during the holidays.

Thank you once again for your support of the school this Summer Term, and for your encouragement and feedback. I wish you all a happy and safe summer and look forward to an exciting new academic year.

Kind regards



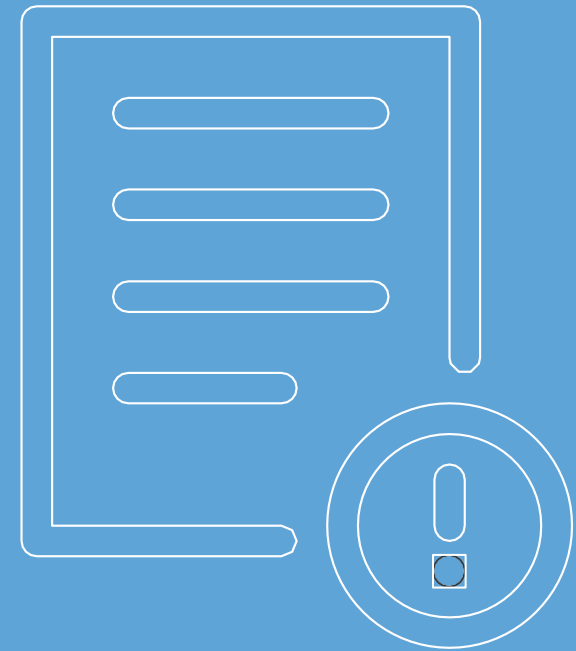
Mr O'Neil
Head




Polam School
for boys and girls aged 12 months - 9 years

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR

1. Back to normal - this means open and running a normal day for all year groups, within the government guidelines.
2. Wellbeing - a focus on both students and staff to help them emotionally process the lockdown experience.
3. Safety – risk mitigation to include enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures with new procedures for confirmed cases and outbreaks
4. Growth mindset - taking the lockdown experience and continuing to innovate and grow from what we have learnt.

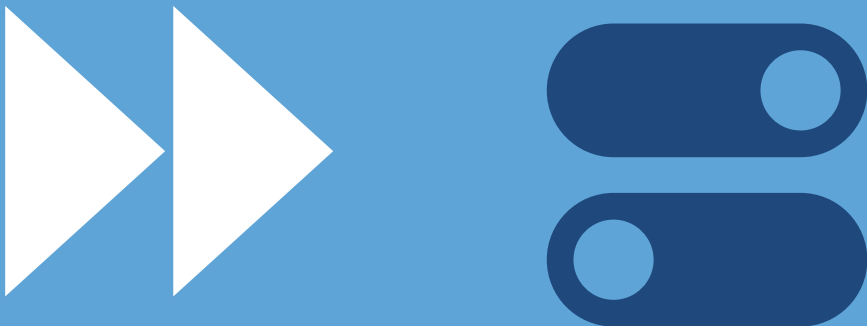


HOW WILL IT WORK?

We have done a large amount of scenario planning and we're confident we can get back to normal.

The latest government guidelines have significantly reduced the need for social distancing and as a result schools will be encouraged to return to a full timetable for all year groups.

This is great news and to the right is a summary of what we know now. This is, of course, conditional on the continued downward trend of the infection rate.



GUIDANCE SUMMARY

Based on the government guidance released on 2 July this is what we are basing our planning on:

- Primary - the bubble concept will be increased from a maximum of 15 to 30. This means our classes can return as full year groups, and we may even have the flexibility to create larger bubbles for a whole key stage for example
- Primary (with specialist teachers) - Specialist teachers will be able to move between classes provided they maintain social distancing.
- Some of the features from this term may need to remain such as staggered timings and one-way systems, as will a focus on hygiene and cleaning.
- Catering has already returned to normal and will continue to operate as normal.
- Track and trace in schools will be a focus

ROUTINES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

STAGGERED START AND END TIMES

We are fortunate to have multiple access points to both buildings which will mean that we are able to welcome children in a safely coordinated way. However, to avoid bottle-neck and crowding issues, we may have to continue to stagger the start and end times for certain classes / year groups. This will change from the current system to one in which siblings will be able to be dropped off at the same time. We will do our best to minimise disruption to you as parents and will communicate any changes to start / end times in advance of the start of term.

GREETING OUR FRIENDS AND TEACHERS

As we have been doing this term, we will continue to promote the 'self-hug' or 'distance hug' as a way of greeting our friends and Teachers. Please continue to practice this with your children over the summer break so that they are familiar with this way of greeting each other when we return to school in September.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

We will continue to urge children to regularly wash their hands just as we did pre-lockdown and since the return to school in June. We have enough bathrooms to support this and a timetable to assist staggered set times.

Extra supplies of soap and paper towels will be in place along with access to hand gel.

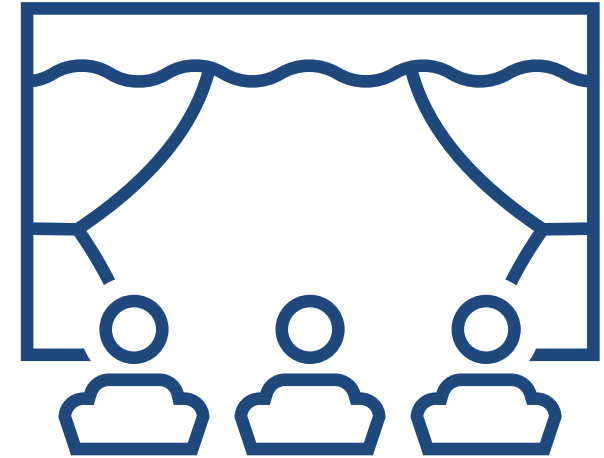
You can help by reminding your children of the need to regularly wash their hands for 20 seconds by singing happy birthday twice.



ASSEMBLIES AND GROUP GATHERINGS

We are planning very carefully with regard to assemblies for the children. This is a key function in maintaining the wider sense of community and celebration across the school. While at the moment, we are not able to bring all the children together as we used to do, we will make sure that the children are able to participate in these community events through other means, for example live streaming them into classrooms.

School Concerts and Productions are also a much loved and anticipated event at the school. This is a real opportunity for the children to showcase their musical and acting talents and we know that you as parents love to watch them. Where possible we will run these events in the larger bubble groups and if we are not able to invite you into school or venues to be audience members then we will look to alternative ways for you to enjoy these events.



FAQS



WILL THERE BE AN ANNUAL INCREASE TO FEES NEXT YEAR?

No. Given the exceptional circumstances, the economic situation and the value we place on our relationship with our parent cohort there will be no fee increase for the 2020/21 school year.

ARE SPORTS, CLUBS & TRIPS RETURNING?

Yes, where possible. We are keen to return to 'business as usual' as much as possible, and this component of education is important.

Certain non-contact sports are approved, and clubs can generally re-start, although there are some restrictions in the latest guidance that we will work through over the summer. We are also planning to have the wrap around care offer of before and after school clubs.

Domestic trips are permitted, but not residential. We keep a sharp eye on government advice on these topics as guidance changes frequently.

WILL CATERING RETURN TO NORMAL?

Yes. We may need to operate staggered mealtimes, and apply some other operational safeguards, but we intend to return to catering as it was before as far as we can, within the guidelines.

WHAT ABOUT LOCAL LOCKDOWNS?

We are planning in detail what happens if the school needs to temporarily close in the case of an outbreak or localised lockdown. If the call comes, we can respond quickly, following a pre-agreed plan.

WHAT ABOUT INFECTION CONTROL?

We will continue our robust cleaning regime next year and work closely with our cleaning staff to ensure every possible risk mitigation is taken. We are also reviewing our infection control procedures over the Summer to allow us to track confirmed or suspected cases and communicate with parents in the smoothest way possible

WHAT WILL THE CHILDREN WEAR TO SCHOOL?

Children will wear their own clothes for the first half term. Winter uniform will be worn after October.

WILL THERE BE SPECIALIST LESSONS?

Yes, the children will still receive their PE, French and Music lessons.

WHAT ABOUT SWIMMING?

Swimming will be initially available to Year 2 and KS2 pupils. We will look to increase this for other year groups after October.

RETURN TO SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

98%

of parents agreed that their child benefitted returning to school

98%

of parents agreed that their family benefitted from the return to school

96%

of parents agreed that the return to school process was well managed by the school

100%

of parents agreed every possible risk mitigation that could have been taken was taken by the school

THANK YOU FOR THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- We have been so impressed with the communication sent and the precautions being put in place. I feel Polam have been extremely proactive in ensure the safety of our children as well and parents/ carers and staff.*
- We are incredibly thankful and happy with the ways in which Polam have dealt with this situation from start to present. All decisions made seem to have been carefully considered, planned out and put in place.*
- The teachers and staff have all been fantastic and appear to have adapted seamlessly, from class learning, online learning and back to distanced classroom learning, all the while still catering for key worker children. Very impressive.*
- Brilliant communication and effort on behalf of the entire Polam team. Thank you for everything you have done.*

