

28 August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write to you to set out the arrangements we have made to safely reopen following the most recent advice and guidelines.

Thank you.

Before I set out these arrangements, I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their understanding and cooperation since we had to close from 23 March. I know that this period has been challenging for many families, in particular when you have had to juggle work commitments with managing childcare, if you have children with special educational needs or disability, or if you are a single parent. Thank you for understanding that we were not able to start any new children in the summer term. However we look forward to welcoming all our new children from week beginning 5 September.

As you know we opened for a small group of children for the last 4 weeks of the summer term, for just 4 mornings a week. This worked extremely well for us all, despite the many restrictions and the cleaning routines and keeping the children within their small group/bubble.

I am pleased to let you know that, further to the government's announcement that early years and childcare providers can open fully for all children from September, we are working hard to take the necessary steps to be ready to welcome back our children.

We are really pleased to say that we will be open for all our pre-Covid sessions from September. The latest statistics continue to state that for the vast majority of children and young people, coronavirus is a mild illness. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-schools-and-childcare-reopening> Some categories of children with specific serious health conditions should think carefully about attending their early years setting. Please contact us so we can discuss the details with you.

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

First and foremost, it goes without saying that the safety of your child and of our staff is our top priority. Government guidance has provided a number of new

ways to open as safely as possible, focusing on measures that will help limit the risk of coronavirus transmitting within our setting.

We are following guidance from the Government and also taking advice from Herts for Learning and from the Early Years Alliance who have been very proactive in keeping us informed and providing practical supporting advice throughout this pandemic.

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

- ✧ We are very fortunate that St John's Methodist church have allowed us to leave our area set up throughout the week as we are the only group using the back of the church building. This will make cleaning easier for us.
- ✧ Carpets, walls, tables, chairs, climbing and play equipment will be cleaned as will anywhere the children or staff touch such as in the toilet areas, doors and handles etc. We will select easy to clean toys and resources to be used so we can clean between each group of children.
- ✧ Staff will have available to them the necessary personal protective equipment such as gloves, aprons, face shields, face masks and goggles. These will primarily be used when changing nappies or if a child is displaying symptoms.
- ✧ Hand sanitisers, both personal and throughout the playgroup, will be provided for easy access and will be used regularly alongside thorough handwashing.
- ✧ The staff will not routinely wear facemasks, unless they choose to. However, if a parent needs to enter the setting they will be asked to wear a mask and follow our handwashing routines.
- ✧ Cleaning will be carried out throughout the session, with regular wiping of surfaces, resources and equipment.
- ✧ **Asking that anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or who lives with someone who does, do not attend the setting. That includes children and staff who work here.**
- ✧ Keeping our children in groups with consistent staffing where possible, and limiting contact with other groups around the setting.
- ✧ Cleaning our hands more often than usual. We have developed routines to ensure children understand when and how to wash their hands, making sure they wash them thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
- ✧ Ensuring our children understand good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and ensuring a good supply of tissues and bins throughout the setting.

- ✿ Implementing an enhanced cleaning schedule, ensuring surfaces touched by children and staff are cleaned regularly, including table tops, door handles and play equipment.
- ✿ Asking parents and carers to physically distance from each other and staff when dropping off and collecting their children. Please observe the distancing lines outside the setting. Our new entry point will be **the doors from the car park** as the front of the building will only be open when other groups are using the front hall.
- ✿ No other groups - for the time being - will be allowed access to the back end of the church. This includes the kitchen and church office.
- ✿ We need you to **limit drop off and collection to one parent or carer** per household if at all possible. This should be the same adult every day
- ✿ Asking children not to bring toys or other items from home to the setting, unless this is essential to their health.
- ✿ Arranging for staggered start and departure times to avoid large groups of adults and children waiting outside. We ask that you respect this arrangement. Please observe the 2 metre distancing rule.
- ✿ We ask you to not enter the playgroup area but deliver your child through the designated entry points where a member of staff will take your child to their group. This will be the door from the carpark
- ✿ We will wash/sanitise your child's hands once they have hung up their coat/bag. We will provide hand sanitiser and a wash station at entry points.

What can parents and carers do to help?

There are a number of things parents and carers can do to help us make these arrangements effective, in addition to the points listed above concerning arrival and departure and not bringing toys to the setting.

1. Please explain to your child (who is returning after a long break) that it will be different at playgroup when they return; they will not be able to play with all their friends; they must listen to the rules which the staff will be implementing. It is important that we keep everyone as safe as possible.
2. If you need to speak with a member of staff we ask that you wear a facemask to protect yourself and staff member
3. Anyone who begins to display coronavirus symptoms while in the setting will be sent home immediately following government guidelines. While a child is waiting to be collected, they will be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff if this is possible.

4. If your child, or anyone in your household has or displays coronavirus symptoms you may not bring your child to the playgroup. You must follow Government guidance on self-isolation. Please inform the playgroup immediately.
5. If a child who is attending playgroup is a suspected coronavirus case you will need to immediately collect your child if they develop symptoms while at the setting.

Testing

Now early years and childcare providers are open, all children who are attending a childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. The aim is to enable children to get back to childcare, and eliminate the need for parents or carers to self-isolate for any longer than necessary, if the test proves to be negative. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect other children and staff in their setting.

We ask all parents and carers to ensure they organise a test for their child, in the event that they develop coronavirus symptoms, and notify us immediately of a positive test. Further guidance is available online through the www.coronavirus.gov.uk website.

Conclusion

For those children returning for the first time following lockdown in March, we are attaching a form for you to complete; this will be an opportunity for you to let us know how your child has coped during lockdown and the sorts of things they have been doing. We feel that will help us to get to know the 'new' children who are returning after a long absence. We will also try to set up an opportunity for your child to speak with their keyworker before returning. Please let us know if this is an option for you.

I hope that this letter has given you the information you need to understand what arrangements we have made to enable children to start in September. We are looking forward to welcoming your child and I hope that you are assured that we have taken all possible steps to ensure safety for all in our setting. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us.

Kind Regards

Celia Mills, Manager, on behalf of
St John's Nursery Playgroups Team