

The Bellbird Primary School Governing Body



Policy Statement on the re-opening of the school following the COVID-19 lock down

21 May 2020

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Introduction

This document is intended to set out the Governing Body's position on the re-opening of the Bellbird Primary School, Sawston, Cambridge from 1st June 2020 following the COVID-19 lock down.

On 21st May 2020 the governors of the school held an online meeting of the Governing Body to consider the government's potential advice (which is expected to be finalised with at least 48 hours' notice) to re-open schools on 1st June 2020. This meeting had minutes taken in the usual way. This document will be made available on the school's website.

At the meeting on 21st May, 13 out of the total membership of 14 on the governing body attended, including 6 parent governors with children at the school. Governors were given information in advance as listed in the '*Further information*' section on page 6.

Background

On Wednesday 18th March, the Prime Minister announced that UK schools should close until further notice as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic from Friday 20th March. Since then, the school has been open only to vulnerable children and the children of key workers in accordance with government and LA guidance, with teachers providing home learning resources for pupils.

On Thursday 16th April, the Foreign Secretary described five tests that the government would need to be satisfied of before considering it safe to adjust any of the current measures.

On Sunday 10th May, the Prime Minister announced that the government believe we may be in a position to begin the phased reopening of primary schools, in stages, beginning with reception, Year 1 and Year 6 at the earliest by June 1, and that primary schools should begin preparations to do so safely.

Role and responsibilities

- The government will advise schools to re-open on 1st June if they think it is safe to do so.
- The decision to reopen a school should be on the basis that the risk to pupils and staff with the school open is less than the risk to pupils of delaying opening.
- It is for the head teacher to decide on whether the school re-opens as this is an operational issue.
- The Governing Body has a legal duty of care to staff and pupils and therefore has a role in both advising and supporting the head teacher and on this basis, and to assist in reassuring parents, staff and other stakeholders, the governors have reviewed the factors involved and come to a view on whether they support re-opening of the school on 1st June 2020, if that is the final recommendation of the government.

Key questions

1. Do the school's re-opening plans and risk assessment meet government guidance?
2. Do those plans take into account local issues? [such as: the school building, the pupils and the external COVID-19 related environment relative to other areas]
3. Will the Government's five tests be satisfied in the local area? [see section '*The five tests*' on page 4]
4. Is the risk to pupils and staff with the school open less than the risk to pupils of delaying opening?
5. Have adequate arrangements been put in place to regularly review the risk assessment after any re-opening?

During the meeting, the governors considered the 5 questions outlined above and concluded that:

Question 1 could be answered as 'Yes'.

Question 2 could be answered as 'Yes'.

Question 3 could be answered as 'Subjective. Governors are not qualified to answer in full. Will be guided by the Government's opinion'.

Question 4 could be answered as 'see section 'Risk' on page 4'.

Question 5 could be answered as 'Yes – see the section 'Monitoring' on page 4'.

Note: Question 4 is in many ways the key one and involves a complex and difficult issue of judgement, based on the latest information and advice from government and other sources.

Risk

In comparing the risk to pupils and staff with the school open as planned from 1st June with the risk to pupils of delaying opening until September, the governors felt:

- Medically, the risk to pupils and staff would currently be greater if the school is opened compared with the risk to pupils if the school delays opening until September assuming that the pupils belong to households that are isolating.
- Emotionally and educationally, the risk to pupils would likely be reduced if the school is opened compared with the risk to pupils if the school delays opening until September.

Monitoring

- The critical incident team will convene every two weeks to review the status and LA guidance and the risk assessment
- If any issues arise, the critical incident team will be able to meet at short notice
- Governors will stay alert to the situation and raise issues where appropriate via the critical incident team and the chair of governors.

The five tests

The 'five tests' were originally presented by the Foreign Secretary on 16th April 2020 and were later described in the Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy in May:

Test	Foreign Secretary 16 April	COVID-19 recovery strategy
	Now, in terms of the decisions that lie ahead, we want to be as up front with the British people as we possibly can. So, let me set out 5 specific things which the government will need to be satisfied of before we will consider it safe to adjust any of the current measures.	The Government's priority is to protect the public and save lives; it will ensure any adjustments made are compatible with these five tests. As set out above, the R is now below 1 – between 0.5 and 0.9 – but potentially just below 1. The government has made good progress in satisfying some of these conditions. The ventilated bed capacity of the NHS has increased while the demand placed upon it by COVID-19 patients has now reduced. Deaths in the community are falling. However, real challenges remain on the operational support required for managing the virus. The Government cannot yet be confident that major adjustments now will not risk a second peak of

Test	Foreign Secretary 16 April	COVID-19 recovery strategy
		infections that might overwhelm the NHS. Therefore, the Government is only in a position to lift cautiously elements of the existing measures.
1	First, we must protect the NHS's ability to cope. We must be confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK. The NHS staff have been incredible. We must continue to support them as much as we can.	Protect the NHS's ability to cope. We must be confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK
2	Second, we need to see a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates from coronavirus so we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak.	See a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates from COVID-19 so we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak
3	Third, we need to have reliable data from SAGE showing that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board.	Reliable data from SAGE showing that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board
4	Fourth, we need to be confident that the range of operational challenges, including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.	Be confident that the range of operational challenges , including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.
5	Fifth, and this is really crucial, we need to be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelm the NHS. The worst thing we could do now is ease up too soon and allow a second peak of the virus to hit the NHS and hit the British people. It would be the worst outcome, not just for public health, but for the economy and for our country as a whole.	Be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS.

Further information

The Government's plan and timeline for re-opening primary schools is a subject of controversy with several groups, such as the BMA and teaching unions challenging the Government.

The available information is changing and developing each day.

To date, the following relevant sources of information have been identified:

#	Source	Date	Title	Notes	Link
1	DfE	Updated 15 April 2020	Correspondence: School governance update March 2020	Useful background about Governing during lockdown [nothing about re-opening of schools]	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update/school-governance-update-march-2020
2	Dominic Raab	16 April 2020	Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 16 April 2020	Describes the five tests for recovery	https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-16-april-2020
3	HM Government	May 2020	OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy	The detailed recovery plan. Not yet updated for school re-opening. Includes commitment to 200k tests per day by end of May.	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf
4	DfE	Updated 12 May 2020	Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings	Advice for schools on how to re-open schools and minimise the risk of transmission	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
5	NGA	12 May 2020	The governing board's role in the safe opening of	Brief note for governors on their role and responsibilities in re-opening	https://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/May-2020/The-governing-board%E2%80%99s-role-in-the-safe-opening-

#	Source	Date	Title	Notes	Link
			schools for more pupils	schools.	of.aspx
6	NEU GMB Unison Unite	Approx. 18 May	Coronavirus crisis Workplace checklist	Check list for primary school opening based on an interpretation of DfE guidance.	https://unitetheunion.org/media/3087/coronavirus-workplace-checklist_0.pdf
7	HM Govern ment	Updated daily	COVID-19 UK data dashboard	UK Covid-19 data. Some region specific information	https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/#category=ltlas&map=rate