

June 2020



SIR JAMES SMITH'S
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Dear Parent/Carer

As a History teacher I know that when planning for the future, looking at the lessons from what has happened in the past can help us feel more confident. It is difficult at the moment to feel confident about very much, nothing feels very certain. Nonetheless, I would like to start this letter with an illustration from history that I think can offer us an example to take confidence from about the plans being put in place currently to rise to the challenges parents/carers, pupils and staff at SJS are facing.

In 1961 America announced their intention to land a person on the moon. Stay with me. As if this wasn't ambitious enough they gave themselves a time limit, they were going to do it before 1970. Incredibly (and here is the key) *they knew in 1961* that the technology, materials and skills necessary to get to the moon had not even been developed or invented! That didn't stop them aiming for it though and you've got to love that as an example of aspiration. Ambition. By the summer of 1969 America had achieved their goal and Neil Armstrong took those first small steps.

Aspiration, Ambition and Achievement

Over the last few weeks we have become increasingly aware that school is unlikely to return to what we would all see as normal any time soon. You may have seen headlines over the weekend making this point. Without a medical breakthrough, the scientific advice suggests that social distancing is going to be a feature of our day to day lives for many more months to come. Normal school life and 'social distancing' are two things that don't go together comfortably. That said, the way things have worked out for pupils in year 6 returning to Primary schools last week is worth highlighting. We can take confidence from the fact that this has gone really well, the vast majority of families have felt confident about the safety of their children and recognise that getting that experience of school before the summer holiday is something their children need. Next week it will be our turn.

For some time now the school has been putting together plans for the gradual return of more pupils to Sir James Smith's. I would like to share with you our plans for the weeks of term that remain as well as our thoughts on the impact social distancing may have on your child's education looking ahead to September.

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The plan for the rest of term:

wb 8.6.20 (Week B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tasks will be set on SMHW for Maths, Science, Geography, DT, Music and PE as per the information available on the SJS website.• Year Directors will produce and share assemblies which can be watched on a device such as a mobile phone, updating pupils on what has been happening and the key issues coming up for their year group.
wb 15.6.20 (Week A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information available on the SJS website is updated. Home learning will now be more personalised, making use of tools and technologies that offer a greater connection between the teacher and the pupil. Pupils and parents/carers should notice a move away from large projects and work set to cover for an emergency.• Home learning set for English, History, French/German, Art, Catering, Computing and Drama.• Form tutors to provide a way for their tutees to 'check in' through video conferencing.• Year 10 pupils to return to school for one day in the week. See below:

On Monday 15 June Year 10 pupils will finally be able to come into school to experience their 'timetable in a day'. This matters. The Department for Education and Ofqual continue to say that GCSE's will go ahead next year. Each tutor group in year 10 will come in for one day in the week and there will be three different weeks when year 10 pupils are invited in:

- Ms Dillon** **Monday 15.6.20, 22.6.20 & 6.7.20**
- Mr Jackson** **Tuesday 16.6.20, 23.6.20 & 7.7.20**
- Mrs Jones** **Wednesday 17.6.20, 24.6.20 & 8.7.20**
- Mr Riviere** **Thursday 18.6.20, 25.6.20 & 9.7.20**

- The start and end time of the day will be the usual 8.10am until 2.30pm.
- All buses will be running for those year 10 pupils who travel by bus. On 27 May 2020 Pupil Transport emailed all parents/carers of year 10's, with information on the new routes and pick-ups. If you haven't seen this please check your spam/junk folders. **The current guidance is for people on public transport to wear a face covering.** Details of how to make one of these at home can be found here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52609777> although pupils won't need to wear one during the day when at school.
- Pupils will arrive in normal school uniform, with a packed lunch (if you're receiving weekly eVouchers this will continue but you will need to provide a packed lunch for the day, there will be no canteen), water bottle and with their own stationery.
- After a welcome in the Main Hall pupils will be split into three groups of no more than 9 pupils. These 9 pupils will stay together for the next three sessions in a rotation to limit the mixing of groups of pupils. They will go for a 40 minute session with a Maths teacher followed by one with a Science teacher before having a break to be with their friends and then attending a third session with an English teacher. These sessions will complement the home learning that has been set and during them the teacher (not necessarily your child's teacher but a subject specialist nonetheless) will want to find out how home learning has gone.

It will be important to be honest here. Absolutely no judgements will be made about your home learning, we know that almost all pupils have given this a go but we expect everybody to be at very different stages. The purpose of the sessions is to help clear up any confusion or misunderstanding of the work set and help the teachers plan the next series of home learning. It would be helpful to bring in any and all work done if not already uploaded to Show My Homework.

- Pupils will then go to their Option A subject which will be staffed by their usual teacher. If your child is in 10A/A with Mr Langton for example, then they will have a session with Mr Langton about their Art work.
- There will be a lunch break followed by 3 further sessions, one for Option B, Option C and finally Option D, all with your child's usual option block teacher.

The current risk assessment and updated behaviour policy can be found on the school's website. These will be reviewed again during the course of this week and shared with parents/carers.

<p>wb 22.6.20 (Week B)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, a repeat of the week before. Y10 will come in for a second time following the same routine; Ms Dillon's tutor group in on Monday, Mr Jackson's on Tuesday etc. • Home learning set for Maths, Science, Geography, DT, Music and PE • Pupils to 'check in' through video conferencing with their Form Tutor.
<p>wb 29.6.20 (Week A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 6 pupils visit for their Transition Day. A tutor group on each day with activities designed to help them make new friends and become familiar with their new school. • Home learning set for English, History, French/German, Art, Catering, Computing and Drama. • Pupils to 'check in' through video conferencing with their Form Tutor.
<p>wb 6.7.20 (Week B)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A third occasion for year 10 pupils to come into school following the same routine described above, Ms Dillon's tutor group on Monday etc. • Home learning set for Maths, Science, Geography, DT, Music and PE • Pupils to 'check in' through video conferencing with their Form Tutor.
<p>wb 13.7.20 (Week A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the model for year 10 pupils, year 9 pupils will be invited into school, a tutor group on each day. This is to help them prepare for the GCSE courses they will begin in September. • Home learning set for English, History, French/German, Art, Catering, Computing and Drama. • Pupils to 'check in' through video conferencing with their Form Tutor.

We were asked to plan optimistically and as you can see, this is what we have done, all the while putting the safety of pupils and staff at the very forefront of our thinking.

All of the plans outlined above depend on the local and national situation either remaining as it is today or improving steadily. Schools in the North West will have been producing similar plans only to learn at the weekend that they need to push them back by a week and cannot welcome year 10 pupils back until the 22 June at the earliest. It may be that changes effect what we can do with pupils in year 6 and in year 9, it simply isn't possible to say at this point.

Disappointingly it is possible to say something about things we can be sure of about the remainder of this year:

- There are no plans currently to welcome year 7, 8 or 11 into school before the end of term.
- There will be no year 10 work experience or Activities Week in July.
- There will be no year 11 results day in August; results will be posted home instead.

It's difficult to be optimistic after describing the things that don't look like they'll be happening but I'll share with you our thinking for September.

September 2020:

There are three possibilities and we are planning for all of them:

1. It could be that the scientific guidance about social distancing changes or a medical solution is found which will make it possible to open the school to all year groups. Something we all hope for and have been working hard to make sure we're ready for. Over the last few weeks we have appointed 3 new teachers to accommodate the extra pupils enrolling to SJS for 2020-21 and have one further appointment to make. Mr McGuffie has produced a normal timetable, one that can handle all of our pupils on site at the same time in all of their normal lessons. If things are back to something like normal in September, Sir James Smith's will be ready.
2. A second possibility is that a spike in the infection rate following a summer during which North Cornwall is visited by hundreds of thousands of people desperate for a holiday forces us to go back into lock down. If this is the case we will be well placed to support pupils with home learning, this will be very different from the hurried situation we found ourselves in back in March.
3. What seems most likely at the moment is that we will be able to open our doors to more pupils but that some sort of social distancing will remain in effect, making it impossible to have all year groups in at the same time. The rest of this term is in many respects a dress rehearsal for this scenario. There are 20 tutor groups in the school normally; the plan for the rest of this term is to have just 1 on site on any given day. This is in line with the current DfE guidance which says there should be a maximum of 25% of year 10 pupils in at any one time. The experience of working with that 1 tutor group will give all of us the confidence to increase this to more tutor groups next year if the guidance changes as we suspect it will, opening our doors to a whole year group at a time. This would give all of our pupils the opportunity to see friends and specialist teachers but this will mean that home learning is something that will need to continue.

I warn you now, I'm an optimist. Regardless of how the plan for the rest of this term pans out or what the situation is in September I believe that both teachers and parents will emerge from this prolonged disruption better able to support the learning of pupils who will themselves be better, more confident and independent learners. I understand the challenges; I see many of them every day in the experience of my own 14 year old daughter. Whilst the skills and technology necessary to make these optimistic ambitions for our learners are yet to be mastered (see what I did there, moon landing?) teachers and staff at SJS have already shown they can quickly adjust to new ways of working with new tools in new ways.

I will of course keep you updated with all developments and as ever, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the school through the usual channels.

Keep well.

Yours faithfully



Kristien Carrington
Headteacher