



Governors Newsletter May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure that you will be aware of the latest Government announcement regarding the gradual reopening of schools from 1st June, along with the vast amount of speculation and commentary that has been circulating in the press following this announcement. I know that many parents have expressed serious concerns regarding the potential return to school and hope that this letter addresses some of these immediate concerns and questions.

Firstly, I think it is important to note that the first stage of reopening is intended to be a 'phased return of some children from 1st June, at the earliest'. The year groups indicated in Government guidance are Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. I would also like to stress that our hard-working staff want nothing more than to be able to return to school and get back to normality; the staff of St Augustine's are really dedicated, and, just as for you at home, it has been very difficult to be away from the routine, structure, and the joy and immense satisfaction that they get from the day to day contact with our lovely children. But we must ensure that this return does not jeopardise the safety of children, families and staff. Whilst we will endeavour to follow Government guidelines, the reopening of the school is the school's operational decision that will consider the Department for Education guidance, Local Authority advice and the context of our school. There is not a "one size fits all" approach to reopening and each school is likely to approach this in a different way. This decision will be made by Mr Hilliam, and our Senior Leadership Team, along with the Governing Body of the school. A full risk assessment has been carried out and will be implemented before any final decision is made. The risk assessment will determine whether or not it is safe for pupils and staff to return to school, and which pupils will begin first.

Of course, our school will not be reopening at 9am on the 1st June for all Year 6, Year 1 and Reception children. Any return to school will undoubtedly be very different to what we recognise as 'normal school' and there are many factors that will need to be considered when carrying out the risk assessment and planning. Areas of change will include:

- Groups for teaching purposes. Children will be organised into small groups, called "bubbles". They won't necessarily be in the same "bubble" as their close friends;
- Lesson content and the continuing need to provide teaching support for our children at home;
- Timetables with staggered start and end times for the school day;
- The need for social distancing and for frequent hand-washing, and how that will be organised, and
- Organising the scope of self-isolation if a child tests positive for Covid-19.

It will help your child if you let them know that they are unlikely to be in their familiar classroom or with their familiar adult carers at school.

The school will not be able to offer breakfast nor after school clubs for the time being.

As always, I know I can rely on you, as parents and carers, to be of great help during this time. Your support in reinforcing and practising social distancing and frequent hand-washing will help your child accept the "new normal", and ease the transition as it impacts them. Social distancing for carers as well as children will still apply outside the school gates, and as far as possible, communication with school must be via phone or email.

We are lucky enough to have large outdoor areas at the school, so children will have the opportunity for outdoor play but this must be in within social distancing guidelines. Unfortunately, there will be no opportunities for school masses, assemblies, gatherings, visits or group activities, such as end of year celebrations and sports' days.

Your input into this planning is extremely important. I completely understand that many parents will not want to send their child back to school at the moment and will be concerned about the implications. Should you decide not to send your child back at the moment, you will not be fined for non-attendance. The school will, of course, continue to provide care for children of critical workers and those in need of special support, and will provide ongoing support for children still at home using the school's Google classrooms and learning packs. Content will be the same as the work being done in school.

This is only the beginning of our gradual return to normality. There is a long way to go. Many questions remain unanswered and we may face further lockdowns and/or partial closures. We will do our best to keep you informed. Please work with us as we move forward and always remember that the love of Jesus, and safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and staff rests at the heart of all decisions that we take.

Kindest regards

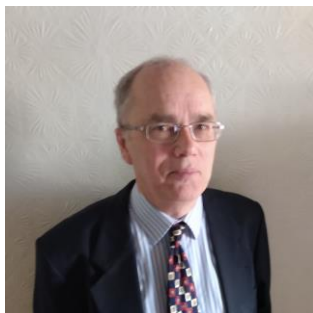
Peter

Peter Taylor

Chair of Governors

Welcome to our new Governors

John Fenlon – Foundation Governor



I took early retirement in 2018 after 40 years in Banking. I have lived in Downend and been an active parishioner in St Augustine's for over 20 years. My three children, who have all now graduated from university, went to St Augustine's school and two of them benefitted from SENCO support. The education they received from the school gave them the excellent start that they needed for their academic accomplishments. I became a Foundation Governor and member of the finance committee to help support the quality and values based education that my own family has enjoyed.

Dr. James Lander – Parent Governor



I am an aerospace engineer and I have lived in Downend for 5 years. My work involves managing big projects and includes engagement with a variety of industry partners and UK Government. This is my first experience as a Governor. I have two sons at St. Augustine's who really enjoy going to school, which motivated me to contribute in return. My aims are to continue to facilitate the positive links between the school and parents & carers and to assist staff in securing external support opportunities, e.g. STEM, to supplement the children's learning experience.

“Created by God to love and learn”