

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you for your patience and understanding while we have been responding to the Prime Minister's announcement this week, since then we have been working to plan how best to operate in the context of the new variant of the coronavirus and the rapidly increasing infection rates. Please remember that we have a duty of care to ensure we are as safe as possible for the staff and adults within our setting, as well as the children. In an open-plan environment, with over 50 children in attendance each day, it is vital that our measures are as tight and effective as we can make them and that staff are confident with these new controls.

The plan that we have made is:

- **Nursery School is open to all children from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January.** We have been in touch with all our new starters and discussed their individual start dates so that they can each receive the attention they deserve as they settle in.
- In order to allow for an enhanced daily deep-cleaning regime we have adjusted our start and finish times. **The morning session will begin at 9.20am and finish at 11.50am. The afternoon session will start at 12.30pm and finish at 3.00pm.** This is essential if we are to meet the challenge of reducing the risk of infection from this highly infectious new strain of the virus. We need to continue with **staggered arrival times in the mornings, with 15 hour children to arrive at 9.20am and 30 hour children at 9.30am.**
- **We are unable to offer wraparound care (breakfast or ACE Extra sessions)** due to staff availability.
- **Children who attend for lunch sessions can continue to access these sessions,** meaning that for 30 hour children they can attend the morning and afternoon sessions.

It is now more important than ever that all our families support us and each other if we are to keep everyone as safe as possible. All existing safety measures remain in place and we have added to these. Our updated, full risk assessment will be added to our website on Monday.

The most visible changes, that you will see in place on Monday are:

- Adults will wear masks both indoors and outside, whilst moving around or whenever children need closer support.
- We have implemented a system of rotation for resources – this ensures that all resources, inside and outside are either cleaned at the end of each day or will be quarantined for 72 hours before they are provided for the children to use again. This includes items that children may need to borrow such as spare clothes, gloves, waterproofs.

Please continue to follow all measures fully, including:

- Please arrive at your allocated time at the start of the day, to help families socially distance.
- Use the one way system and leave the site promptly once your child has been dropped off.
- Children who find it difficult to wash their hands as they enter nursery school must have hand sanitiser applied by their parent before entering the garden.

- Please dress your child appropriately to stay warm – they will spend the majority of their session outdoors and the indoors will be colder than usual because of the need for increased ventilation to control the virus.
- We ask all families to err on the side of caution when assessing if their child is well. If your child appears in any way “under the weather” please do not attend nursery school. If your child needs Calpol before attending nursery school, we request that you consider that they are not fit to attend at this time.
- Please ensure that your contact details are up to date and that there is an authorised adult available to collect your child **at all times** should they become unwell while at nursery school. We must minimise the time that an unwell child is at school if we are to protect staff and other children.
- Adults must wear face masks (unless exempt) – including older siblings that may need to accompany you when dropping off or picking up your nursery school child.
- Please ensure all adults and siblings sanitise their hands as you enter the site.
- One adult only please should accompany your child.
- Please maintain a safe distance from staff and other families. Please keep your child by your side at all times.

**We aim to stay open as much is as possible, but this will be subject to staff availability and so might be subject to change at short notice.** In order to keep children, families and staff as safe as possible, we need to ensure that groups of children and staff across The ACE Centre settings stay as separate as possible. This means that we have less flexibility than usual in deploying staff in the case of absence or illness within our team and, while we hope to avoid it, we are concerned that this may mean that we face a greater possibility of disruption to the sessions we provide. If we face the situation where we have fewer staff available, we may need to reduce the number of children who can attend, so that we can keep going for the majority. If this happens we will contact you as soon as possible (before 8.30am) to let you know that we do not have capacity for your child to attend on that day. Key worker and vulnerable children will always take priority for available places and we will ensure that individual children are not disproportionately affected by any reduction in their sessions.

We hope to return to our normal hours and practices as soon as is safely possible and will keep you up to date with any changes to these temporary increased measures. We understand that each family will have their own circumstances to consider during the next days and weeks and are here to talk through any individual concerns on the phone or by e-mail. **Please do talk to Lexy or I if you have anything you need help with.**

We regret that the short notice we have had of the requirements placed on nursery schools at this time has delayed the start of term for many of your children, but this was completely out of our control and, as I have already said this week, we felt it essential not to be rushed into compromising the safety of your children, families or our dedicated team.

We also send our heartfelt thanks for all the support and understanding that parents and carers have shown for each other and The ACE Centre team over the past two terms.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ruff

Headteacher