

Dear Parents

Firstly, I would like to thank all our parents for their continued support and good wishes throughout these unprecedented times. Your responses to our questionnaire have been extremely useful in helping us to decide when we will be able to open. Your questions and concerns have certainly been taken on board, helping us to create a COVID 19 safe strategy that will allow us to welcome our staff, children and parents back into nursery safely. As you can imagine we have and always will be guided by government and scientific evidence relating to COVID 19, resulting in a much changed and reduced service.

Before I set out the arrangements we have made, I know and understand 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.

I am now able to let you know that we can provide early years education and childcare for the small number of parents who have requested places for their children from the 8th June 2020

Further to the government's announcement that early years and childcare providers can open from 1st June (subject to scientific advice), we are working hard to take the necessary steps to be ready to welcome back **children whose parents have requested places** from the **8th June 2020**.

We will look to open for more children only if the government confirms that their five key tests justify taking this step.

For most children and young people, coronavirus is a mild illness. Some categories of children with specific serious health conditions should not attend their early years setting. If you are unsure whether your child should attend the setting due to a health condition that they or someone they live with has, 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 you, your child and our staff is our top priority. We are working hard, following the latest government guidance, to develop and implement a number of new ways of operating. This will allow us to open as safely as possible, focusing on measures that will help limit the risk of coronavirus transmitting within our setting.

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

- Asking that anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or who lives with someone who does, not to attend the setting. That includes children and staff who work here.
- Keeping our children in small groups with as much consistent staffing as possible, and minimising 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 and throughout the day, including tabletops, door handles and play equipment.
- Asking parents and carers to physically distance from each other and from staff when dropping off and collecting their children and to limit drop off and collection to one parent or carer per household.
- Asking children not to bring toys or other items from home to the setting, unless this is essential to their health and wellbeing.

What can parents and carers do to help?

There are several 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.

We would ask that you follow the guidance below if your child, or someone in their household has coronavirus symptoms:

DO NOT ENTER THE NURSERY SITE

IF

You, your child or someone you live with

has any of the following:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus

Call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Do not go to places like a GP surgery, hospital or pharmacy

111 will tell you what to do and help you get a test if you need one.

Parent Information COVID 19

We have and always will be guided by the government and scientific advice relating to Covid 19

In opening the nursery, we have followed the guidance and advice for childcare settings

We have carried out a Covid 19 risk assessment and put measures in place to minimise risks, some of these measures include:

- Restricted access to the nursery to children and staff (unless under pre-arranged/emergency situations)
- Instructing all children/staff and those parents dropping and collecting children **not** to enter the nursery if they or someone from their household has symptoms of Covid 19/ or that they have followed and completed the government advice on isolation
- Instructing that only one parent/carer drops off and collects their child at any one time
- Aiming to provide a 2m rule for parents arriving/leaving nursery by changing procedures, space markers, staggered drop off and collection times
- Instructing that no children are allowed in nursery if showing any symptoms of illness
- Ensuring hand washing facilities/hand sanitizers are available and used
- Ensuring handwashing is frequent and as government advice
- Increased the cleaning within the nursery, to ensure all high touch areas are cleaned/sanitized frequently.
- Minimised the number of adult workers to establish the 2 m rule which has also reduced the number of children in each area
- Aiming to ensure that each classroom (bubble) is working separately from the others

Covid 19 Temporary changes

Due to the unprecedented Covid 19 pandemic we are operating differently. It has been a major task to ensure we are able to keep both our children and the staff team as safe as possible during our opening hours.

The Nursery routine, some procedures, and the number of staff within the Nursery classrooms have been changed to accommodate government safety guidelines and instructions.

As you know we have a large staff team working within the Nursery classrooms, these staff numbers reflect the number of children permitted within each classroom. However, due to the 2m social distancing rule which will apply to our staff team, we are having to decrease the number of staff within each room to ensure the staff are able to maintain the social distancing required for safe working. As you can imagine, this reduction in staff will have an impact on the number of children allowed in each classroom and will reduce the amount of administration procedures that can be undertaken.

Booking procedure

We have always been proud of the way we accept bookings and of the flexibility we aim to provide for all our parents and carers. It is always a very time consuming and difficult job to input the many different and changing bookings each week in order to then organise the staff rota to ensure that we always have the appropriate and correct number of staff working.

At this present time, we may not be able to offer such flexibility in the bookings as we are working with the many challenges that Covid 19 has produced.

Therefore, we are having to temporarily change the way we accept and organise our bookings.

- To ensure that there is limited face to face conversations with parents /carers we are asking that parents email bookings to enquiries@footstepsnurseryworkington.com
- We are asking parents where possible to use a permanent booking i.e. to request the times/days they wish to book for their child, if possible, these times will be the same every week. (If you usually have a rota system PB then this will be taken into consideration as we only have a limited number of staff available as we gradually unfurlough our staff in line with demand)
- Where number ratios permit hours may be added to on a week to week basis if required, again any additional requests need to be emailed in no later than Tuesday (12 noon) the week before.
- The number of children in each room is reduced, so the bookings will be allocated as fairly as possible in the case of increased booking numbers.
- If you are unable to set permanent booking hours, please email us and a member of staff will contact you to discuss further options. However, please be aware these may be limited.

This booking procedure is not permanent, we endeavour to return to our usual flexibility as soon as we are able to.

Drop off and collection of children

We have always encouraged parents and carers to enter the Nursery and feel part of our family. However, due to the restrictions we have due to Covid 19 we are unfortunately now unable to allow parents and carers to enter the Nursery, except under exceptional and pre-arranged circumstances.

Therefore, we have made temporary changes to our drop off/collection procedures.

- Parents dropping children who attend our Sitters Crawlers and Standers classroom, or our Movers Shakers and Explorers classroom should arrive at the front of the building (automatic glass doors) where they will be warmly welcomed by one of our staff who will be waiting for you on your allocated booking time. If for any reason you are late and there is no one in sight please ring nursery and the allocated member of staff will come out to greet you.
- Parents dropping children who attend Talkers and Pretenders classroom, or Thinkers Creators and Inventors classroom should arrive at the usual entrance to nursery, (black gate) where they will be warmly welcomed by one of our staff. FOR YOU OWN SAFETY PLEASE DO NOT USE THE BUZZER, simply telephone nursery to let us know you are there.
- To ensure the number of parents outside the building is limited we may have to stagger times for arriving at nursery
- To ensure that parents are adhering to the social distancing rules we have placed 2m markings on the ground
- We are asking parents to provide verbal feedback at the point of handover or if you prefer you can telephone us from home or upon arrival at Nursery from your car.
- Following the verbal handover a member of staff from the room will come outside to collect your child.
- When collecting your child please telephone to let us know and we will give you a verbal handover, a member of staff will then bring your child outside to you.
- We ask that your child does not bring any unnecessary equipment and toys into the nursery (necessary comforters will be allowed)
- The pram store is no longer to be used, so unfortunately prams/pushchairs and car seats can no longer to be stored within the nursery and nursery grounds

This temporary procedure is far from our ideal, however, necessary to reduce the risk of infection into the Nursery.

Settling in procedures

We have always aimed to provide a smooth transition from home to nursery for our children. Parents and carers are normally welcomed into the nursery, however, due to the Covid 19 restrictions we are unable to welcome parents into the nursery. We fully understand this may be very difficult for all concerned.

- We will be asking parent to follow the drop off and collection procedures as stated above
- We will telephone you to collect your child if staff assess that it is required
- We will assess your child's time with us and recommend the time we feel they should be with us and aim to gradually increase the hours to meet your requested booking hours
- At all times we will provide you with as much information as we can

This is a temporary and completely different way to our usual working, as soon as is safely possible we will be re assessing

Child illness/administration of medication

We have always been mindful that young children have many 'coughs' and 'colds' and other childhood ailments e.g. teething and have aimed to ensure children have been able to attend nursery where possible. We have been able to administer medication e.g. Calpol (where requested as procedures).

However due to the restrictions from Covid 19 children who show any signs of illness will not be able to attend nursery

- If child shows any signs of illness, they will not be allowed to attend nursery
- If a child becomes ill at nursery the usual procedures will be followed
- If a child becomes ill with Covid 19 symptoms the usual procedures will be followed, however, the member of staff with the child may wear protective PPE (gloves/mask/face shield)
- Staff are no longer able to administer medication (if your child takes medication/may require prescribed medication please contact staff)

Payment of fees

Invoice payments

Parents and visitors are restricted from entering the Minto Centre and Nursery therefore the options for paying invoices are:

- Card payment via telephone

- BACS payment/internet banking
- Direct Debit

Lunch payments

We are unable to handle cash within Nursery and therefore asking that all lunch payments are paid as above in advance, possibly weekly to prevent small amounts overwhelming accounting procedures.

If you are unable to pay invoices using the above methods, please contact the office 01900 872011

What can Parents carers do to help the transition from home back into nursery

- Start by talking to your child about nursery, use the term 'remember when',
- Access our website www.footstepsnurseryworkington.com and show your child the images of their nursery.
- Sing familiar nursery songs with your child/baby, all our children sing the 'hello song', which was posted on our facebook page.
- Senior staff will be contacting families who have requested places, they will be hoping to speak to the children where at all possible, senior staff working with children under two will be contacting returning families in order to have information sharing conversations.
- There is lots of good information available on the website, have a browse.
- If you need any help or support please do not hesitate to contact us, we are always available. The emotional well-being of your children is so important to us.

Testing

Once early years and childcare providers open to more children, 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 their parents or carers not to need to self-isolate any longer than is 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 about [getting tested](#).

Conclusion

I hope that this letter has given you the information you need to understand what arrangements we have made to enable children to return to us from **8th June**. We are looking forward to welcoming your child[ren] back 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 let us know.

I am aware that as we take little steps back to providing a reduced service here at Footsteps Nursery many of you will be reassured that as ever our aim is to provide an outstanding level of service to our children and families.

While we would love to open our doors on the 1st June 2020 it has become evident that small tentative steps need to be taken to ensure a safe return for all it would appear that the 8th of June is a much more realistic date, I appreciate that some parents will be disappointed however we must ensure that the safety of everyone concerned is our main priority.