

Mugginton Church of England Primary School



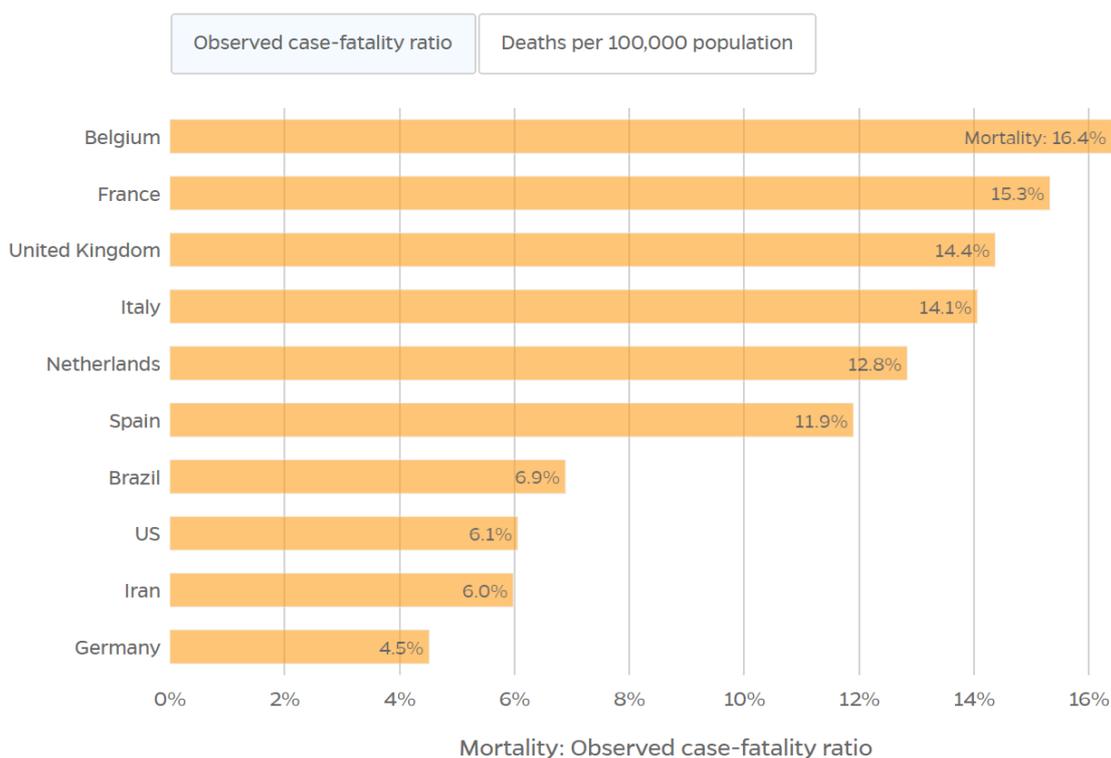
Re-opening Mugginton CE Primary following Covid-19 Lockdown

Updated, 29th May 2020 (**Review 5.6.20**) (**Review 15.6.20**)

Introduction

The current COVID-19 pandemic is caused by a coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. Coronaviruses (CoVs) are a large family of viruses, several of which cause respiratory diseases in humans, from the common cold to more rare and serious diseases such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), both of which have high mortality rates and were detected for the first time in 2003 and 2012, respectively. It is suspected to be a zoonotic virus (a virus transmitted from animals to humans) and, whilst the zoonotic source of SARS-CoV-2 is unknown, the first cases were reported in Wuhan City, China in December 2019 (see WHO 'Origin of SARS-CoV-2', 26 March, 2020).

Coronavirus is significantly more dangerous than more common diseases such as the common cold or flu in England. John Hopkins University recorded an 'observed case – fatality ratio' of 14.4% in the United Kingdom – the third highest in the world.



NHS UK describes the main symptoms of coronavirus to be a high temperature and a new, continuous cough. Individuals who experience symptoms are told to not leave their home (self-isolate) for seven days and members of their household must self-isolate for 14 days.

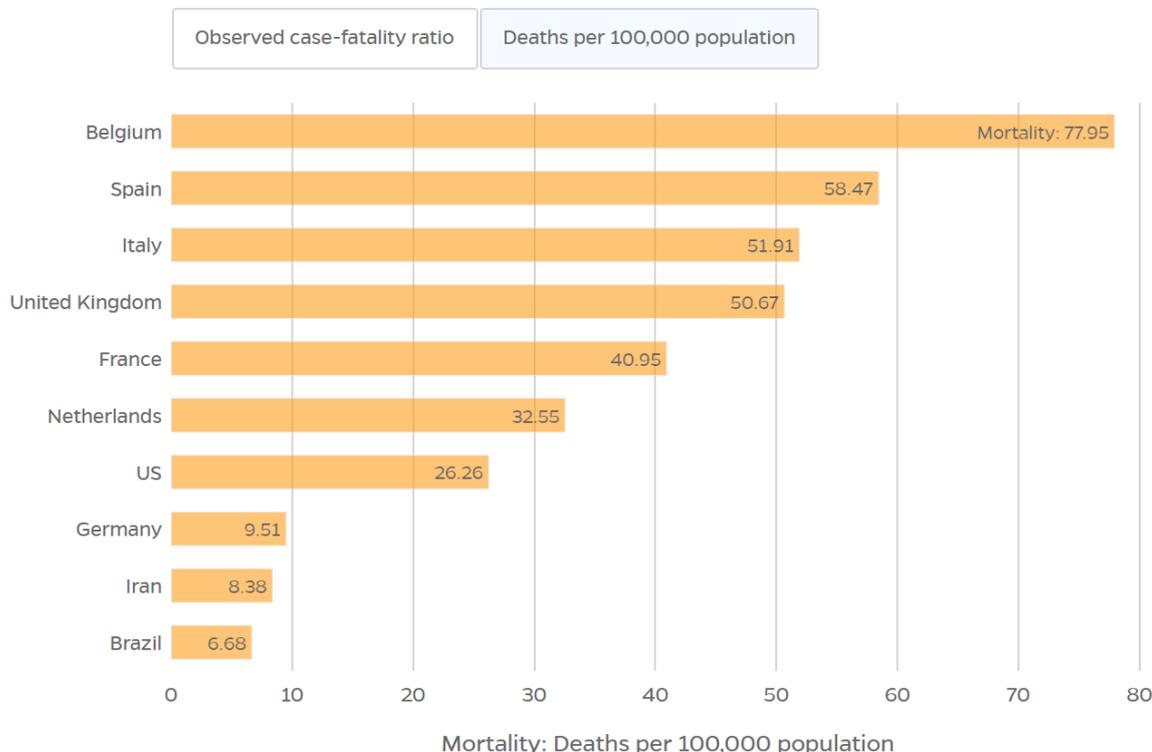
The UK government advises that ‘Social Distancing’ between people is important to prevent transmission of the virus. It recommends a distance of two-metres. Advice for effective social distancing varies by country and by institution – for example, the World Health Organisation recommend a distance of one metre. In short, there is no scientific consensus on what constitutes effective social distancing to prevent transmission of the coronavirus. A recent paper concluded that the transmission distance ‘might be 4 metres’ (Guo et al, 2020).

Mugginton CE Primary closed to children at the end of school on Thursday 19th March. The school has been deep-cleaned and the children’s learning has continued via the new Mighty Mugginton Blog (www.mightymugginton.wordpress.com).

Current Situation, May 2020

By 5pm on May 14th, 236,711 people had tested positive for Coronavirus in the UK and 33,998 people who tested positive had died. The second largest death toll in the world, after the United States.

According to the Office for National Statistics, by May 1st, 2020, 88% of recorded deaths involving Covid-19 were individuals over 65 years old. Males are at greater risk, making up 57% of all deaths involving the disease. The United Kingdom has been affected significantly by coronavirus. Whilst there remains great debate about the statistics recorded (for example, using the metric of ‘excess deaths’, the UK performs worst in the world) all statistical reports indicate that the United Kingdom is one of the four most badly affected countries in the world.



Following the national lockdown, transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased and the government suggests we may be able to allow children in Reception, Year One and Year Six back to school from the week commencing 1st June 2020. Mugginton have 5 Reception children, 6 Year One children and 12 Year Six children on roll.

Why school leaders are concerned

Schools leader have expressed a number of concerns about the intention to reopen schools in this manner. Selected examples include:

- 1) The timing of the announcement and complete lack of accompanying detail. Four days after the Prime Minister's address, guidance continued to be published by the DfE. There are currently 11 documents for school leaders on the DfE website, the most recent was uploaded on Saturday May 16th, almost one week after the announcement was made to reopen schools.
- 2) School attendance of key worker children during lockdown was approximately 1%, according to analysis by the DfE. To increase this to up to 50% of capacity is a significant jump.
- 3) Many were surprised that the government identified a date to open schools rather than a safe point based on infection and death rates.
- 4) Beginning the return to school with the youngest, most vulnerable children.
- 5) The ambiguity over 'social distancing', which it is now agreed is impossible to establish meaningfully with young children.
- 6) The lack of consideration of the fact that schools are not homogeneous entities – we have infant schools, junior schools and middle schools.
- 7) The British Medical Association published a letter in support of the National Education Union which concluded 'until we have got cases much lower, we should not consider reopening schools.' If the medical profession express such unequivocal opposition to the reopening of schools, is it right to pursue the current policy?

My concerns, particular to Mugginton

- 1) The lack of scientific consensus regarding a June reopening of primary schools. Devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have decided it is too early to re-open primary schools, despite England being most severely affected by coronavirus. Why?
- 2) A Japanese study examining 110 cases of coronavirus concluded that the odds of a primary case transmitted Covid-19 in a closed environment (such as a school) was 18.7 times greater compared to an open air environment (Nishiura et al, 2020).
- 3) The ONS cites US research which demonstrated that primary education professionals are exposed to disease and to close proximity with others more frequently than many other occupations



Source: ONET - US Department of Labor, Annual Population Survey and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Office for National Statistics

- 4) Belated confirmation from the DfE indicated that staff do not require Personal Protective Equipment to work, except when caring for a child displaying symptoms of the virus. However, no scientific studies were cited to support this assertion.
- 5) It is a blessing that very few children develop severe symptoms if infected with Covid-19, even if they have underlying health conditions. However, the data is limited. Longitudinal studies are underway and early indications are that young people who have recovered from mild cases of coronavirus are still at risk of pulmonary fibrosis (lung tissue scarring) and kidney damage (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-52506669>). Reports concerning an illness similar to Kawasaki Disease developing from coronavirus infection in some children are a concern.
- 6) Assertions such as ‘children do not get it’ are wrong. All research indicates that children are just as likely to contract coronavirus as adults (see ONS, May 14th; Bi et al, 2020; Jones et al, 2020; Mizumoto et al, 2020). There is not consensus regarding transmission rates of different age groups (NCIRS, 26th April, 2020). However, it has been demonstrated that infected children’s ‘viral load’ (the amount of the virus in their body) is no different to an adults (Jones et al, 2020).
- 7) Closing schools lowered the ‘R’ Number in the UK and US (Ferguson et al, 2020). A poorly thought-out reopening of schools could lead to an increased rate of infections, pushing the ‘R’ Number above 1.
- 8) Three members of staff are in moderate-to-high risk groups, at least one of whom will have to be in school in the event of a reopening.
- 9) Are we to offer education or childcare? If we are offering education, how do we maintain our commitment to the principles of inclusion when over half of our children will not be able to access lessons in school. If we are offering childcare, what is the rationale behind offering to reopen schools for pupils in the selected year group.
- 10) One of our central aims is to maintain a sense of ‘Mugginton-ness’ to our children – they need to recognise the school they are returning to, despite necessary changes we will have to introduce. How do we protect the children’s (and staff) mental health; is this easier to do at school or at home until it is safe for every child and staff member to return to school?
- 11) There is no antibody test available to teachers and regular testing for Covid will require staff to make a 42-mile round trip to the nearest test centre in Beeston, Nottingham if home testing kits are unavailable.

Finally, there is evidence the public is more susceptible to infection if schools are open. Sweden’s decision to keep all primary schools open is in contrast to their Scandinavian counterparts with whom they share many demographic similarities. The table below demonstrates countries’ differing experiences of coronavirus

Country	Population	Confirmed	Deaths	Case-Fatality	Deaths/100k pop.
United Kingdom	66.6	234,440	33,693	14.4%	50.67
Sweden	10.2	28,582	3,529	12.3%	34.66
Denmark	5.8	10,911	537	4.9%	9.26
Finland	5.5	6,145	287	4.7%	5.20
Norway	5.4	8,196	232	2.8%	4.37

Source, John Hopkins University - <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>

Parental Response

Parents were invited to complete a two-question '30 second' questionnaire. The results of the first questions are recorded below – they demonstrate that parents are split over whether it is right for schools to reopen or not.

If my child were eligible to return to school on June 1st

[More Details](#)

- I would be happy to send the... 14
- I am unsure whether I would s... 16
- I would not send them to sch... 13



The 38 expanded responses (5 parents did not complete) to the second question are available in appendix 1. All issues they raise are intended to be covered in the Risk Assessment.

The reality

Mugginton is a small school with 62 children on roll. Since the building work in the infant classroom was completed, we have two classrooms, one 51m² and one 68m², giving the children 119m² of classroom space. DfE guidance recommends adjusting seating arrangements to ensure distance between children (2.3 metres squared for Reception children). If it is assumed that each child or staff member in the classroom required a metre either side of themselves to work with some form of distancing, this would allow for 29 individuals to be in the classrooms. However, a minimum of four adults will be on site (including bursar and cleaner) so the reality is that approximately 24 children will be able to return to school and work according to government guidelines in our school.

My staff and I believe that effective social distancing with primary school children, particularly the very youngest, is unrealistic. For example, what happens when a child falls over and scrapes their knee? How does a staff member help the child whilst maintaining social distancing? We are unwilling to make unrealistic proposals and, therefore, social distancing at Mugginton will mean appropriate seating, limited numbers in toilets/basins and controlled playtimes with certain team games banned. Parents will not be allowed into the building and delivery drivers will leave parcels outside. There will be no 'one way corridors' and no staggered playtimes. In addition, we believe that staggering morning drop off and afternoon collections will not be necessary because of the small number of pupils involved.

By reopening to the youngest children first, the hygiene demands are increased significantly. Younger children are more tactile and their respiratory hygiene is often under-developed. To learn appropriately, Reception children require a rich, interactive environment which requires physical interaction with a range of materials. Studies conducted on three cruise ships which experienced large scale infection of Covid-19, reported that Coronavirus RNA was found on surfaces aboard ships up to 17 days after passengers disembarked (Moriarty et al, 2020). Other studies indicate that coronavirus can survive for up to nine days on plastics, glass and metal if they are not disinfected (Kampf et al, 2020).

Our Plan to Reopen Mugginton (Monday 1st June until Friday 19th June)

Aims

- 1) To minimise the risk to our children and staff's health, safety and wellbeing.
- 2) To offer children a safe, fun and enriching environment to learn, exercise and interact with their teachers and peers, whilst including children who cannot be in school.
- 3) To project a sense of normality (our 'Mugginton-ness') to children

We intend to re-open to 24 vulnerable children, children of critical key workers, children in Reception, Year One and Year Six in principle on June 1st. Any return will be done in partnership with our parents. Nobody will be 'strongly encouraged' to bring their children to school. The DfE state that they expect attendance to be recorded but have not announced exactly how non-attendance will be recorded and have given no additional guidance on this (although there is still the weekend remaining which gives them ample time!).

The school day will run from 9am - 3.15pm. There will be no before- or after- school clubs. In week one, arrival and departure times will not be staggered because of the low number of families arriving and departing. This will be kept under daily review. **School will be closed to children on Fridays.** This allows staff their legal entitlement to PPA non-contact time and every staff member in school time to travel to Nottingham to be tested for coronavirus on a weekly basis, which they are expected to do at least once per fortnight.

Children will be supervised washing their hands at the beginning of the school day, after playtime, before lunchtime, after lunchtime and at the end of the school day. In addition, regular 'top-ups' using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser will be applied. Seating will be arranged so each child has a desk and space from their peers. Only one child or staff member will be able to use the toilets at a time. PPE has been sourced from Derbyshire County Council and aprons, face masks, visors and gloves are available to all staff and are to be worn by the cleaner. Staff may wear PPE when looking after a child with Covid-like symptoms.

There will be no rota systems (i.e., different year groups/children in at different times), in line with DfE recommendations. No adults other than staff will be allowed on site. Deliveries will be left outside and the buzzer will be disabled to minimise risk of transmission of germs from common touch points. A notice will be attached to the door explaining that the buzzer is not in use and to telephone the school office and step back from the door. An 'X' will be fixed to the ground to indicate where to stand.

Staff numbers will be kept to a minimum to limit the risk of spreading the virus. I will be in school with Mr Clarke, Ms Sutton to clean during the day and Mrs Horobin in the office. Mrs Jones will run the school blog for children who cannot come to school and Mrs Wallen will be in school on each Monday to welcome the youngest children and plan age-appropriate activities for them.

There will be no school lunches. All children will be asked to bring sandwiches to school. Children in Reception and Year One are entitled to free lunches; I will ask parents to let me know what sandwiches children like and will buy lunches from a supermarket when required.

A sign will be placed on the playground gate advising the public to not enter the playground at any time.

Children will be able to come to school in PE kit. The aim will be to spend as much time outside as possible - transmission rates are much lower outside. A typical day during this three-week period will be a mathematics and literacy lesson in the morning – the materials/activities used in school with the children will be posted on to the blog each morning so all children can access the same work regardless of where they are learning.

In the event of a confirmed case of Covid-19, the school will close immediately for a minimum of two weeks and the risk assessment reviewed. If school leaders decide that risks cannot be further controlled following a confirmed case of coronavirus in a teacher or child, the school will close until September.

In the event of a child presenting with Covid-like symptoms (lose of taste or smell; temperature of 37.8 or greater, new, dry, continuous cough), the child will be sent home for a minimum of seven days and the parents strongly encouraged to take their child for a Covid test. Families with children in school will be notified that child (or staff member) has gone home as a precaution and to take additional care.

For the reasons set out above, school capacity is limited to 24 children for the week. In line with the government's aim for primary schools to welcome back all children by June 22nd, we will review the situation at the end of each week. It is intended that capacity will rise by a small number (certainly below 10 children) each week during this three-week period. Children will be offered a place in school based on their ranking according to the following criteria.

1. Vulnerable children, children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, Pupil Premium Children
2. Children of NHS Frontline Staff
3. Children in Reception, then Year One and then Year Six with a parent who is a Key Worker
4. Children with a parent who is a Key Worker and has a sibling in Reception, Year One or Year Six
5. Children with a parent who is a Key Worker

If parents reject the offer of a place it will be offered to the person next on the list.

Week 2 Plan and Rationale for weekly/fortnightly testing of staff

Our return to school in the first week of June was a success. Parental feedback was universally positive and the children all reported feeling very happy to be back with their friends and teachers. The positive effect on their mental health cannot be over-stated. Two key findings emerged from the first week:

- 1) Children can improve their basic and respiratory hygiene practices with support from staff. Frequent hand-washing and other hygiene basics has been achieved quickly.
- 2) Children cannot social distance to any meaningful degree. Our building is too small and children have a natural desire to be close to their peers and to staff. To tell parents that we are social distancing effectively would be disingenuous.

A result of the second finding is that the importance of effective hygiene measures and frequent time spent outside the building cannot be overstated. In addition, staff report that being tested for Covid-19 each week gives them an additional sense of reassurance above the hygiene practices we have in place.

Finally, a significant international study focussing on the UK was published in early June. 'Determining the Optimal Strategy for Reopening Schools, Work and Society in the UK' (Panovska-Griffiths et al, 2020) concluded:

'if schools and society reopened with a large-scale TTI (Test, Trace, Isolate) strategy that tests between 25% and 72% of people with symptomatic COVID-19 infections and traces 40-80% of their contacts, with both dependent on the reopening scenario, a secondary COVID-19 wave may be prevented in the UK.'

It appears the case that the UK government has failed to introduce effective national TTI by their stated deadline of 1st June. Therefore, to meet the requirement to open school to more pupils, regular testing of staff is important.

In Week Two, the number of children in school will be increased slightly to 27 children. All still have a desk to themselves and the infant classroom has been separated in to two teaching areas to manage this increase. The aim is to increase the number of children by a similar amount for Week Three.

Week 3 and Beyond

The success of our return is something I will remember for the rest of my career. Staff in school are phenomenal – we have established a calm and happy atmosphere and I have huge respect for all of my colleagues. I do not think there will be many schools who have managed this febrile time as well as we have. The children are happy to be back and to be together with their friends; at times it is quite moving to witness.

The positive impact on the children's mental health of being back in a familiar, structured environment with their friends cannot be overstated.

We plan for a small increase in pupils for Week Three to a maximum of 31 children. We will exceed 30 children for the first time since reopening on June 1st. This presents a challenge because DfE guidelines require a maximum number of 15 children in a classroom. To meet this requirement, we will separate the school in to three teaching areas: the junior classroom; the newly refurbished reception area and the teaching are of the infant classroom. With this arrangement, we are able to welcome the 31 children in to school safely and in line with government requirements.

From Monday June 22nd – the final four weeks

I intend to offer a place in school to every child whose parents would like them to return to school for the final four weeks of term. A detailed rationale follows, however this plan is based on two simple premises:

- 1) Education is a fundamental human right. Our children have not been able to attend school since we closed on Thursday 19th March, over 13 weeks ago. Whilst the school blog has been a success it is impossible to replicate the Mugginton experience via home schooling and puts a great deal of pressure on families.
- 2) The country is “open for business”. Zoos, clothes shops and cafes are open and theme parks and restaurants will reopen shortly. As the photographs taken of shops and high streets on the 15th June demonstrate, social distancing concerns are not severe enough to justify the prolonged closure of shops.

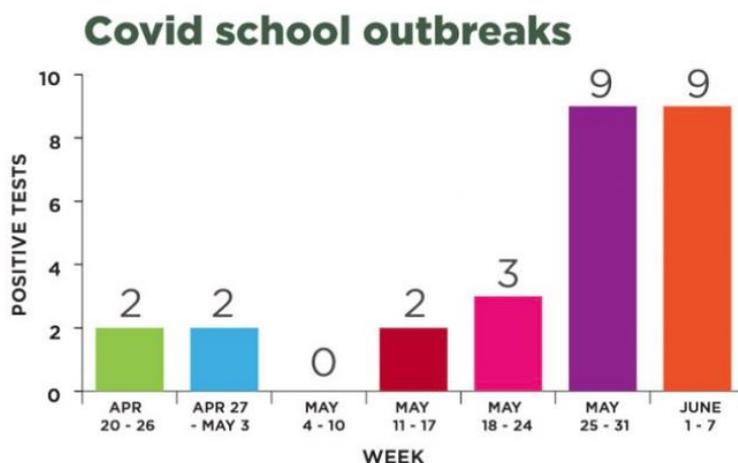


It cannot be right that our children can join a lengthy queue to shop at Primark or Nike, or visit a zoo with friends, but cannot attend school despite the safety measures we have put in place.

The Scientific Evidence

The jury remains out! There is no consistent scientific evidence (except for earlier statistical models) which suggest a high risk to children and adults by reopening schools. The number of virus outbreaks

in schools has not increased since we returned to school according to PHE. An important caveat is that it is still extremely early and it is possible that the number of outbreaks in schools increases.



PHE data on the number of confirmed covid-19 outbreaks in schools per week

The risk to children is low as the table below demonstrates. The population of 5 – 14-year olds in England and Wales is over 7 million. There have been two deaths from coronavirus during the peak weeks of the pandemic in this age group.

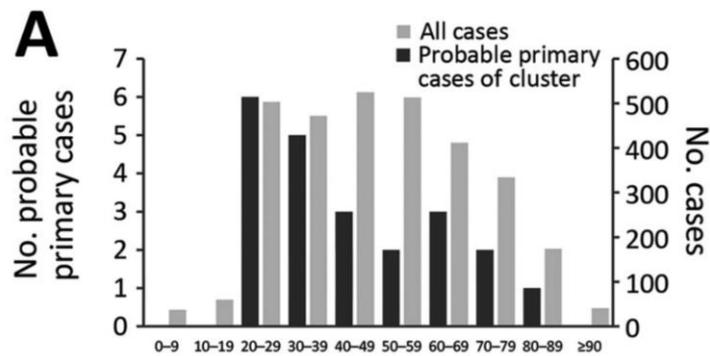
Age	COVID deaths	Population	COVID rate per 100,000	COVID rate as %	COVID rate as 1 in ..	5-year average	COVID as % of 5-year average	Equivalent days of normal risk
0-4	3	3,515,430	0.1	0%	1 in 1,171,810	503	1%	0
5-14	2	7,159,102	0	0%	1 in 3,579,551	94	2%	1
15-24	32	6,988,755	0.5	0%	1 in 218,399	352	9%	6
25-44	450	15,459,158	2.9	0%	1 in 34,354	2,176	21%	13
45-64	4,359	15,162,118	28.7	0.03%	1 in 3,478	10,641	41%	26
65-74	6,662	5,906,928	112.8	0.11%	1 in 887	14,735	45%	28
75-90	23,679	4,395,359	538.7	0.54%	1 in 186	41,180	58%	36
90+	9,682	528,959	1830.4	1.83%	1 in 55	18,523	52%	33
All	44,869	59,115,809	75.9	0.08%	1 in 1,318	88,204	51%	32

Observed population fatality rates for deaths registered in England and Wales over the 9-week period 28th March to 29th May. '5-year average' is the average number of deaths from all causes over this period, 2015–

Developed countries across Europe have re-opened primary schools with differing degrees of distancing and other safety measures. A conference call of education ministers from across Europe led to the Croatian Education Minister, Blazenka Divjak, to report

‘So far we haven’t heard anything negative about the reopening of schools but it is probably too early to have final conclusions on that.’

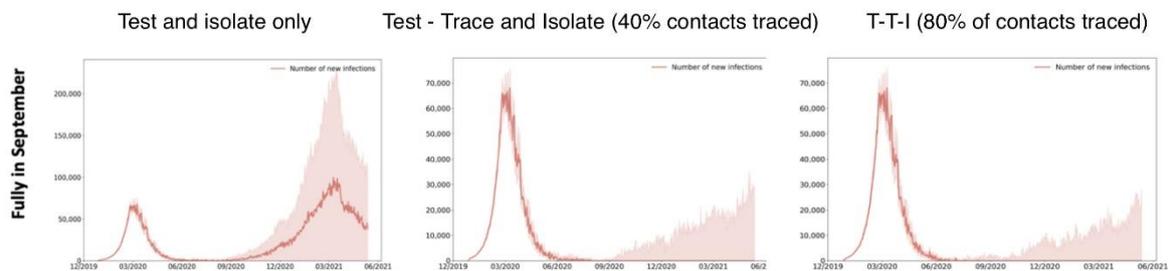
In addition, there is emerging evidence that children are not the cause of outbreaks of coronavirus. A study from Japan, which investigated 3184 cases and 61 case-clusters and identified 22 ‘probable primary-cases’ (Furuse et al, 2020). The primary sources of coronavirus outbreaks were hospitals and care facilities – no cases were attributed to children or to schools.



Whilst the scientific evidence is not conclusive, there is no new evidence that reopening primary schools to a fraction more pupils puts staff or children at significantly greater risk. Therefore, despite the lack of consensus, the overwhelming reasons for opening more fully make it the right decision to open more fully. However, attendance remains voluntary and it is for parents to decide what is best for their individual children.

Concerns

Statistical modelling (Panovska-Griffiths et al, 2020) indicated that an effective Test, Trace, Isolate (TTI) system would prevent a second wave of coronavirus in England. With this evidence in mind, the decision was taken to close schools to children on Fridays so staff can be tested for Coronavirus. However, the government has failed to establish an effective TTI program by mid-June. Without this in place and working effectively across the country, there is a danger that a second wave of infections takes hold and Mugginton is forced to close for a second time. This would be a tragedy for our children. The graph below demonstrates the importance of good TTI, according to the researchers' model.



I am concerned by the lack of consistent guidance, leadership and support at local and national levels. For example, the latest updated DfE guidance on handwashing was published on the 15th June, two weeks after we opened. It is difficult to argue that there is a coherent, well-thought-out strategy to support schools to reopen. I am not a medical professional and I am not an epidemiologist. As a Headteacher, my primary concern at all times is the safety and well-being of my children. In the absence of clear guidance, I have researched the local, national and international scientific data as best I can and have taken the carefully considered decision to reopen to a greater number of children because I think the risk to children and staff can be controlled to an appropriate level.

In conclusion, I intend to offer a place to every family from our community who would like their child to attend school. I am proud to be a public servant and am determined to do everything I can to support our community. This is achieved best by having children in school. Children can visit shops, go to the zoo and buy a milkshake – they should be allowed to go to school.

Reviewing the evidence and reading evidence published since the first draft of this policy offers greater confidence that we are placing no significant additional risk on children or staff by opening more widely, as long as sensible, realistic safety procedures remain in place.

Aims for expanded reopening from June 22nd

- 1) To minimise the risk to our children and staff's health, safety and wellbeing.
- 2) To offer the families of all children who wish for their child to be back in school a safe, fun and enriching environment to learn, exercise and interact with their teachers and peers, whilst including children who cannot be in school virtually.
- 3) To project a sense of normality (our 'Mugginton-ness') to children, which has a significant positive impact on their mental health, ready for a full return in September.

All safety procedures set out in the policy above and in the accompanying risk assessment will continue. An additional staff member, HS, will be in school to maintain safe adult-child ratios.