

February 1st 2021

Newsletter

Dear Parents/ Carers,



As always, I am hoping this Newsletter finds you and your family safe and well.

It is quite difficult writing a Newsletter when so little is taking place in school! We have no assemblies, no use of shared spaces, class sets of bats and balls, individual packs of learning resources etc... The children have found it hard at times, to keep to separate areas to their class friends because they are in a different 'bubble' but they are trying very hard. I think as a school, we have been very lucky so far (touch wood!) that we have only had to send two year groups home once. Some schools have had multiple year groups that have had to isolate and some on more than one occasion. It demonstrates that the procedures we have in place to protect the staff and children are effective.

All staff that work in the school at present, have now been issued with the rapid testing kit. We all self-test on Sundays and Wednesdays in the hope to identify staff that are asymptomatic. This is another level of protection for our staff and children.

I have so enjoyed seeing the children on the screens in classrooms as I walk through the school. They have done brilliantly, getting to grips with this new way of learning and it is wonderful to see how many children are accessing the learning opportunities. I am so proud of them and so should you be. As a school, we have a duty to ensure that all children are engaging in the learning and we certainly have a large majority of our children doing that. We have issued approximately 50 iPads to children that otherwise would not have access to the online learning as well as providing hard copy packs for families that have connectivity issues.

I also have to add on that note, how proud I am of our teachers who have had to change their approach to teaching and the tasks set for learning so quickly, become familiar with the use of new IT programs and systems and work with each other in a very different way.

I do understand the stress that parents/ carers are under, supporting their child at home with accessing learning and possibly juggling a job as well. Please remember, we are not expecting your child to return to school as if there has been no change/ break in their learning. It would not take 5 years to train to be a qualified teacher if anyone could fulfil the role at the drop of a hat! I believe the most important aspects of the learning the children are doing at present is:

1. they have structure to their day
2. it is a familiar timetable
3. their brains are keeping active
4. they are developing independent learning skills
5. they are keeping contact with their friends and class teachers
6. they are consolidating learning that has taken place and in some cases extending it

As a school, we are in a lucky position that in June 2019, I had already planned changes to the timetable of the curriculum to more effectively support our children with learning. You may remember, 4 days each week focus on reading, writing and maths, teaching in the morning, interventions for challenge, consolidation or catch up in the afternoons. 1 day a week is dedicated to Topic, a day

when most of the learning is practical. This lends itself beautifully to when all children return. We will be able to focus on each individual need.

And so, please do not worry or stress about how much your child is doing, whether they are getting it correct, whether you are supporting and/ or whether your support seems to be effective or not. We understand; we will chase your child if we feel they are not doing enough, not putting effort in or relying too heavily on you. Usually, that is what we do on a day to day basis. As I have said in an earlier letter, and mentioned earlier in this Newsletter, it is a great opportunity for your child to become more independent about their learning. They will make mistakes, they will feel unsure at first, but gradually a child learns that they can 'do it' without an adult always being with them. Their self-esteem increases and as a result their confidence.

With the implementation of the rapid test, myself and Emma Donoghue, your incoming Headteacher, have now been able to plan opportunities to 'hand over'. I have known Emma for a number of years as a colleague and a friend and, although I had no role in the recruitment process, I am as 'pleased as punch' that she will be my replacement. She is absolutely right for our very special school and it has made the task of handing over my school to someone else so much easier. You will be seeing her with me on the gates in the morning and afternoon very shortly.

On a more mundane note! If you are beginning to think about uniform for the next academic year, Please, please buy the correct uniform. I purposely designed a uniform that could be bought from most leading supermarkets/ stores for little cost. The cardigan/ sweatshirt is the only item that is purchased from a supplier for slightly more cost. Remember, black and white for everything including the PE kit and we have boxes of pre-loved uniform for sale for much reduced prices.

Let us hope that March 8th will be the date when all our children can return. I would hate to leave at Easter without having the opportunity to see them, speak to them and tell them just how lucky Miss Donoghue is joining our school with our children in it!

Take care everyone and hopefully we will see you all soon.

Pippa Villa

Headteacher