

For I know the Plans I have for you declared the Lord...Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11



8th January 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I hope you are all well and keeping warm and safe.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and kindness as we all adapt to the latest lockdown.

Remote Learning

Thank you so much for sending us your feedback about how remote learning is going. It's still early days. Expertise and confidence will grow as teachers become more confident with experience and ongoing training, but it has been fantastic to read the overwhelmingly positive reports in your emails and on social media. It's so encouraging to know that we are succeeding in our aim to ensure that we keep children's learning going during this lockdown period when they are not able to attend school. Here are some of the lovely comments we have had so far!

- Thank you for all your hard work at the moment
- Thank you for all your hard work and organising that you are doing
- I do appreciate all your efforts in accommodating the children during this difficult time.
- Thank you for working tirelessly for my son and the children of Stokes. My appreciation can not be put into words. May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your hard work and resilience during these uncertain times.
- Can I just say thank you for all the work your staff have put in to the planning and live teaching sessions on Teams. I feel like this approach is going to keep my daughter much more focused on the home learning this time.

Behaviour on video calls

We have been very impressed with how well most children have adapted to working online this week- well done! From feedback from our teachers, we have been told that some children have been talking on the Teams chat to each other- some of which has been really supportive and helping each other and that is fantastic. However, there have been a few instances where some children are sending things like unrelated you tube links or GIFs to one another and some have also been able to take other children off the remote learning session. Please can we ask that children are reminded not to do this and only use the online Teams chat for questions for the teacher. As you can imagine, it is making it difficult for the teachers to teach and respond to questions some children may have about their learning when the chat is being used for social purposes. I thank you in advance for your support in doing this.

Key Worker Places

Thank you so much for the response last week when we emailed out to ask you all to really consider if your child had to come to school. Instead of having 220 children in school, we've had an average of 90 per day, which is much better although still up by over 20 pupils on the last National lockdown. This must be due to the new definition of a critical key worker.

If one parent/carer in a family is working in a role considered to be critical to the management of the pandemic or the Brexit transition, then their children are entitled to a place in school. However, the latest government guidance for schools (published 7th January 2021) clearly states:

Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can. So even if you work as a critical key worker, please do consider if you can keep children at home as your place is not compulsory.

The Government guidance states:

School attendance has been restricted not because schools are unsafe places, but to reduce the risk of community transmission of a highly transmissible new COVID-19 variant. The higher the number of pupils in school, the greater the risk of increasing community transmission and the higher the risk to vulnerable members of our families and communities. We urge you strongly to think carefully about whether you really need a school place for your children. If one parent or carer in your family is a critical worker, please consider whether you have access to alternative childcare. If you are able to work from home, or you have a partner who can work from home, please consider carefully whether you really need to send your child to school. We want to play our part in reducing community transmission – we can only do that if numbers of pupils mixing in school are kept to an absolute minimum.

Of course, the children of key workers are not the only group of pupils entitled to a school place. Pupils who are vulnerable need to be in school. There are all kinds of reasons why a child might be considered vulnerable. I am sure you understand that those reasons are always individual and confidential.

It's really important we keep precious places in school for the children who really need them. Thank you for responding so promptly to the MS Form to book places for next week. This will now be coming out each week to accommodate people who have to work shift patterns. It will be sent on Tuesday to be completed by 12 noon on Thursday to allow us time to consider covering the classes. Thank you.

Staffing Update

Due to the restrictions that have been put into place by the government and for the safety of both our staff and children, we currently have a few teachers that are working from home so we have other teachers and support staff supporting the children who are in school and teachers supporting the online aspects of the learning. As you will know, Miss Jessop has been poorly for a while and following surgery, is now recuperating at home. Sadly, she also lost her dad just before Christmas, so our thoughts and prayers are with her and her family. Mrs Oxborough will be working from home to protect her and her baby. Mr Fox will be working from home too, as will Miss Chudasama who has also just had a COVID death in her family. All of us working in school are hyper aware of the risks we face every day and we have a very detailed and complicated risk assessment to try to ensure that we don't get this virus which will affect our children's learning even further. We thank you for understanding and supporting us with this.

Collective Worship

As a Church of England Primary school, we usually hold a daily act of collective worship in school. For three days of the week these are whole school assemblies and we are keen to get these back up and running for all of our children. We are looking into live presenting on Teams so children at home will be able to join in live with their classmates without needing to admit 390 children from a waiting lobby! Look out for joining instructions next week.

Have a safe, warm and relaxing weekend.

Kerry Rodger
Headteacher