



Friday 5 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

We have one week to go before half term and hopefully, just two more weeks after that, schools **may** re-open for children to return on 8 March.

Over the past two weeks I have had lots of communications, through phone calls and emails from parents who are really struggling to support their children with remote learning, working full-time and trying to keep their heads above water!

For many the snow was a light relief, a distraction from the tough everyday life but with the Government's announcement that schools would not reopen before the 8 March at the earliest, many of you are communicating that you have hit 'the wall' and something needs to give.

I wanted to write to you all, to acknowledge the challenging circumstances we all find ourselves in and to try and reassure you as best as I can, without sounding patronising, that we are understanding of your situations.

Key points to focus on are that my staff and I know that:

- You are all doing the best you can;
- Your family's mental health and well-being has to have top priority.

You have told me that many employers have not been flexible or supportive of your situations. I am aware that many of you are now struggling to continue juggling both your job and remote learning. Many of you have emailed us to explain your situations and have taken the sensible decision to reduce the remote learning and just focus on English and Maths as your employment and mental health and wellbeing have to be key priorities. We know that for some of you who are not working in a paid role you may also be facing challenges with managing your personal circumstances and remote learning. I know all of my staff are trying to support you as best as they can with these challenges.

I thought it might be helpful to remind you of the time when all the children returned to school in September 2020, following the first lockdown and the partial return to school in June. I shared with you in the September class Zooms what my staff and I had observed around the children's behaviours to learning when they returned to school. Many children were experiencing difficulties in concentrating for longer periods of time, poor listening skills and reduced ability to follow instructions, tiredness, reduced

stamina in writing and gaps in their learning. However, over the term with a key focus on developing their personal well-being and social skills and a stripped back curriculum focussing on the key foundations in Maths (numbers) and English,(sentence structure and grammar) your children all demonstrated a renewed enthusiasm for learning and their attitude, focus and concentration returned. They were in a good place when we broke up for the Christmas holidays.

I know that many of you are worried about your child falling 'behind' and understand your concerns. I want to try and reassure you that your children will bounce back quickly and get back on track with their education when they return to school as they demonstrated last term.

During this time may I simply repeat that if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to get in contact with your child/ren's class teacher.

We had a very productive Parent Forum meeting last night and the minutes will be sent out shortly. Thank you for your feedback. To further support your child/ren's mental health and well-being we are investigating the possibility of supplying some pre-recorded yoga sessions and purchasing some pre-recorded sessions with the Happy Human Project. I know many of you attended this webinar last term and found it very helpful in supporting your child.

We will be communicating with you after half term as to our arrangements for parent consultations, which would normally take place just before the Easter holidays.

I will be writing to Nursery parents next week, with regards to arrangements for Nursery provision after half term. We wish our staff a speedy recovery.

I thought I would end my letter quoting Captain Sir Tom Moore, who sadly died this week. I know many of us were inspired by him and all that he achieved during the first lockdown. He was an unlikely hero, determined to make a difference without fanfare. His humble nature and stoicism is a reminder to us all.

"Remember, tomorrow is a good day. Tomorrow, you will maybe find everything will be much better than today."
Captain Sir Tom Moore

Regards

Katharine Ellwood
Headteacher