

Dear Parent/Carer(s)

Welcome to our March newsletter. I write this on the first meteorological day of spring (and St David's Day) and I honestly do feel like spring is finally on the way! I am looking out of the window at Spring flowers, glorious sunshine and the days are finally getting longer too – let's hope this lovely sunshine continues for our school reopening on Monday March 8th and the pandemic will soon be a dim and distant memory for us all. The following information may be of interest to you...

Annual Survey for Parents/Carers:

As you will no doubt be aware our annual survey is currently open and will remain open until this coming Friday March 5th. We have had an impressive 105 responses back so far (thank you to those of you who have returned your views) so please make sure you take advantage of this whole school opportunity to get your voices heard. Ofsted will be resuming their inspections as normal from the Summer Term onwards and, as we were due to be inspected again last Spring, I fully expect them to be visiting again soon. The questions closely mirror those that Ofsted will be asking you so our survey is a very useful tool for school improvement to enable us to glean views before the inspectors arrive. Many thanks for your kind words and astute observations so far, we appreciate the time you have taken to respond.

World Book Day:

World Book Day takes place on This coming Thursday 4th March and we have an exciting unveiling planned that will be launched on the Thursday and benefit all children on their return to school on Monday 8th March. We are so excited to be welcoming the whole school population back once again so this is a superb way to mark the occasion. We have thoroughly enjoyed working closely with our friends at Lingham's Book Shop in Heswall and we hope your children enjoy what the staff have planned. If children would like to dress up on World Book Day they would be most welcome but that is not going to be the main focus of our day as we felt it was a little bit mean on those home learners and we didn't want them to miss out. If children do not want to dress up they are welcome to wear their own clothes for the day (and sun cream, sun hat and sun glasses if this lovely weather continues).

Amazon Wish List:

As we are all back to school on Monday March 8th we thought it would be quite a nice idea to buy every child their own copy of a book that promotes positive mental health. The lockdown has been a challenge for home learners and school learners for different reasons and we are mindful that it might be a good idea for each child to have a copy of a good quality book that they can keep at home and dip in and out of as the need arises. To this end, myself and Miss Arden have created an Amazon book list if any parents would like to purchase copies to be directly delivered to school. We have asked for a class set of each book and, if we do not manage to get enough copies purchased by the school community, we will look to additional fundraisers or to POTS. Ideally we would like to send each child home for the Easter holidays with their own book but we are aware that is not too far away so this will depend on if we can achieve our aim of a book for every child over the next three weeks. Please support us in any way that you are able to by clicking on the hyper link below. Many thanks

https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/2BOW42KQGTAB5?ref_=wl_share

Diary Dates:

Mrs Blackburn has updated the rest of term onto the website calendar and we will hopefully add more and more as the restrictions are lifted. Parents' Evenings will still have to take place over the phone for the time being and we will look to re-launching extra-curricular clubs when it is safer to do so.

Risk Assessment Update:

Please see the school's website for our pandemic risk assessments. The most recent guidance was published at the end of last week so the risk assessment will be revised in due course, before the whole school return and uploaded once finalised and passed by governors, unions and the LA. The arrangements will largely be the same as they were for September to December (see attached redrafted copy of the whole school plan later in this newsletter) but the main changes made by the DfE are detailed below. Please note, I have left the changes for high schools in as well (in blue) for those of you with older children...

1. Attendance 'mandatory' for all pupils

The DfE's guidance states that school attendance will be "mandatory for all pupils from March 8". The usual rules on attendance will apply, including parents' legal duty to secure their child's attendance at school. The ability to issue sanctions such as fines will also be reinstated, and schools will be responsible for recording attendance, following up absence and "reporting children missing education to the local authority".

2. Three on-site tests for secondary pupils

Returning secondary pupils will be tested three times on site and then again once at home in the first two weeks after reopening. They will then be provided with home kits for twice weekly testing thereafter. During the week of March 8, pupils will only be expected to return following their first negative test result. The guidance states that during that week, schools should use code Y to record the attendance of secondary pupils not expected to attend school for lessons because of the testing programme. They should use code X if a child is self-isolating or quarantining because of coronavirus. Secondary and primary staff will be given kits for twice weekly testing at home, **but there will be no testing of primary pupils.**

3. Face coverings in secondary classrooms

The government confirmed today that it is recommending that the use of face coverings in secondary schools be extended to all indoor environments, "including classrooms", for a "limited period" until Easter. DfE guidance published this afternoon confirms that schools should "ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances". Face coverings were previously mandatory for pupils and adults in indoor communal areas of secondary schools. However, the DfE is now recommending face coverings "should be worn in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained." This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering "would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons", the DfE said.

In primary schools, face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors "in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas)". But children in primary school "do not need to wear a face covering".

4. Consider 'staggered starts' or adjusted finish times

The guidance states that schools should “consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave”. However, this “**should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time**”. Staggered starts may include “condensing or staggering free periods or break time but retaining the same amount of teaching time”, or keeping the length of the day the same “but starting and finishing later to avoid busy periods”.

5. Close contacts must self-isolate

The government had originally planned to use lateral-flow tests to keep secondary pupils who were in contact with confirmed cases in the classroom. However, this process was paused last month amid concerns about the effectiveness of the tests.

The guidance confirms that schools must send home anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, “advising them to self-isolate immediately and for the next 10 full days counting from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive”.

6. Change to definition of an 'outbreak' The latest guidance states that schools with two or more confirmed cases within 14 days may have an “outbreak”, and should call the dedicated advice service via the DfE’s helpline. Previously, the guidance stated that two or more cases within 10 days may be considered to have an outbreak.

7. No rotas or class size reductions Schools “should not plan for rotas as there is no requirement to reduce occupancy in schools”, the guidance states. “Instead, everyone must follow the system of controls.” There is also “no need for class sizes to be adjusted from the usual size”, say the DfE.

8. CEV pupils and staff to stay away

According to the DfE, although children are “gradually being removed” from the shielding patients list, those who are confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable should “shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice”. “They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally,” the guidance goes on to say. **Clinically extremely vulnerable staff are also still being advised not to attend the workplace**. Schools should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, “including to work from home”. **Staff living with someone who is CEV “can still attend work** where home-working is not possible and should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings”. Clinically vulnerable staff “can continue to attend school”. In its roadmap, the government has said it “anticipates that it will no longer be necessary to advise shielding beyond the end of March 2021”.

9. Pupils and parents 'anxious' about return

The DfE says it is “likely that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about attending school”. This may include pupils who have shielded in the past but no longer need to, or those living in a household with someone who is clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable. Schools should discuss “any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures you are putting in place to reduce any risks” and remind parents that pupils of compulsory school age “must be in school unless a statutory reason applies”.

10. Provide meals as usual

School kitchens are expected to be “fully open” and providing food for pupils including those eligible for free school meals. However, schools should also “continue to provide free school meal support to pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are learning at home during term time”.

11. Remote education requirements still in force

Although attendance will be mandatory from March 8, schools will still be required by law to provide remote learning to any pupils who need to continue to learn from home. “This includes, for example, where such guidance means that a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate or that clinically extremely vulnerable children are to shield,” the guidance states. “All such pupils not physically unwell should have access to remote education as soon as reasonably practicable, which may be the next school day.” **(This will not apply to children who are off sick, but will apply to those who are needing to isolate – remote education does not necessarily mean ‘live lessons’ and these may not be available if small numbers are not in school after 8th March, but the work will continue to be added remotely to the learning platform).**

12. Resume wraparound provision

From March 8, schools should “work to resume” all before and after-school educational activities and childcare for pupils “where this provision is necessary to support parents to work, attend education and access medical care, and to support pupil’s wider education and training”. The government will amend its Covid regulations to allow for this.

13. Ofsted inspections remain suspended

Routine, graded Ofsted inspections will “remain suspended for the spring term”, the DfE guidance confirms. However, it is “intended that these inspections will resume in the summer term”, and the DfE is “continuing to keep the inspection arrangements under review”. In the meantime, Ofsted will continue with its programme of non-graded monitoring inspections of ‘inadequate’ schools, those judged as ‘requires improvement’ in their last two inspections and some other schools that require improvement.

Return to School Arrangements:

Please see separate attachment for this information. The plan, as you will read, is largely the same as before Christmas and staggered start/finish times will still apply. We have been asked by several parents to remind everyone that the children should not be allowed to play freely and run around at either end of the school day. Children should wait with the adult who has brought them into school/picked them up as we are still trying to remain in strict class bubbles. Many thanks for your co-operation in this matter.

Sainsbury's Donations:

Our local Sainsbury's on Sparks Lane has generously donated sets of stationery to school with the aim of supporting home learners and of helping to replenish our stock that we have shared with home learners. This is very kind of them indeed and we would like to offer our sincere thanks for thinking of us at this time.

Thingwall's Donation Station

We are very pleased to be able to launch Thingwall's Donation Station, following approval of our Risk Assessment from Governors, the Local Authority and our Health and Safety providers. Please drop off tinned, dried items at the Entrance Hall every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. These items will then be quarantined. The Donation Station trolley will be situated outside the canteen (on the grassed area) every Thursday and Friday as long as the weather is good. Please remember to fully sanitise your hands before and after and also quarantine/sanitise the food when you get it home. If you do not want to browse the food trolley please ring the school office for a food parcel instead. Your request will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Risk Assessment is available on the website.

Many thanks.

Celebration Corner (Or HUGGS – Huge Unbelievably Great Goals)

This part of the newsletter is to celebrate the wonderful things your children achieve at home. If you would like your child to appear on our monthly newsletter please contact the school office with your reasons! ☺

All our home learners: *Congratulations to all of our children who have worked at home during this lockdown. You have all tried really hard and quickly got to grips with all of the technology. We are very proud of you all and we can't wait to meet you again on March 8th! ☺*

Best wishes,

Mrs Evans