

Dear Parents

I will be repeating my Keeping in Touch newsletters during our current lockdown, as I felt they helped during the first lockdown, to keep everyone up to date with school life, whether you are learning remotely or in school.

First of all, on behalf of all the staff, I would like to thank you for your gifts, cards and warm wishes at the end of the autumn term. It is very much appreciated by everyone. Clearly no-one was expecting a start to the new term and new year like this. We all hope that you are well and recognise that each individual family has its own challenges to deal with. In particular, we are aware of families dealing with the loss of loved ones and we are thinking of you at this time. As always, if there is any support that we may be able to offer, please let us know.

### **Pupils in School**

The Government message is the same as in the previous lockdown and although they have expanded the list of children eligible to attend school as a critical worker, children from reception upwards should only attend school if it is absolutely essential, is reasonable and correct. We currently have around 30% of our pupils in school, which includes the Ducklings nursery and pupils identified by the Government as being eligible to be in school. The number of children is far greater than during the previous lockdown and we have had to change our approach to accommodate the children and ensure that all of our measures to reduce the risk of the virus spreading are still being fully implemented. We are keeping the children in as small a bubble as is possible, so that, if we were to get a positive case, the impact would mean only a small group of children would need to self-isolate.

### **Remote Learning**

Our approach to remote learning has developed since the previous lockdown. We have completed 8 days and in that time have been able to experiment with aspects of google classroom in order to be able to evaluate what works well and what is manageable for staff and families. Thank you for bearing with us during this time, as I know it has not been easy on occasion.

The staff have drawn up a timetable, which they will be sending to parents, to support you with your own routines and daily planning. These timetables will now become embedded and any minor tweaks will be communicated with parents, as appropriate.

As before, we want the children to be as independent as possible and teachers aim to ensure the work set allows for this to be the case. Where parents are supporting children with completing their work, please can we ask that you support this approach and allow the children to have a go, make mistakes and show their teacher their understanding. In this way teachers can assess the progress and get a better picture of the needs of the children. As we say to the children in school, making mistakes are great opportunities for learning.

We hope that over the coming week, the experience of remote learning will improve, as it settles into a routine and everyone gets used to the system. We are making daily calls to families to offer technical support, when we can see issues online, so please contact us if issues arise.

As I repeatedly say, please continue to read with your child on a regular basis. This can be through Bug Club or other means. Please continue to ask your child questions about their book too to support their developing comprehension skills.

We do not know how long the school closure will last and want to ensure the remote provision is the best quality we can make it and that the gaps in children's learning do not grow.

### **Technical Support**

We have been able to support a number of families over the past week with various technical issues. We are confident that everyone who needs access to a remote learning device has got one. If this is not the case, please let us know. Thank you to our families for coming forward and asking for a device. The children have shown us that they are able to troubleshoot technical problems too and we are hopeful that they will also grow in independence in being able to deal with any issues during 'live' lessons as well as with uploading work.

The more independent the children become with this, the greater opportunities there should be for parents who are home working to be able to do their work.

As a result of being able to support families with access to devices and other technical issues, we are able to increase the number of live sessions being taught. These can create their own problems such as connectivity or sound issues. We will continue to work through them as we know how much it benefits everyone and supports daily communication. Please continue to let us know of any such issues.

### **School Meals**

Dolce will be operating again from Monday January 18<sup>th</sup>. They will be able to provide a hot and cold menu choice for the children in school. They are also preparing parcels for children in receipt of free school meals. They have also produced a menu booklet with a range of meals that can be made with the ingredients from the food parcel. You may have seen on the news issues with the content of one company's food parcels. We do not expect to have such issues, but would please ask that you keep Dolce informed of any concerns and if you feel they're not being addressed to let the school know too.

### **Safeguarding**

If you have any safeguarding concerns during the school closure please contact me, as the safeguarding lead, on [head@acresfieldacademy.org.uk](mailto:head@acresfieldacademy.org.uk).

### **Covid Winter Grant Scheme**

The Department for Work and Pensions has a Covid Winter Grant scheme available to help with food and utility costs until the end of March 2021. This is being distributed by the local authority, so please contact them for further information regarding eligibility.

### **Cheshire West and Chester COVID-19 Recovery Model**

The following link will take you to a range of support materials linked to different areas of health and wellbeing that may be of concern to families during the lockdown.

<https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/recovery-model/>

## **Trust Laptops**

Steve Docking, the CEO of North West Academies Trust, has put out an appeal for laptops, to support families across the Trust schools, which of course includes Acresfield. He started the appeal on Sunday and has already been donated over 80. If you have a spare laptop at home, through work or other contacts and are happy to donate it to the appeal, please can you bring it to school during the school opening hours. It can be left in a bag outside the front door, but please let the office know it has been delivered. The Trust will wipe all content and install new software, as well as have all devices PAT tested. Many thanks everyone.

I hope you are able to have a restful weekend. Keep safe everyone – I will be back in touch next week.

Best wishes

Mike Dixon

[Headteacher]