



Headteacher : Mr D Simson
Deputy Head : Mrs M Smithson

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Dear parent/carer.

Happy New Year to you all, I hope you had a good couple of weeks.

I am sure that this will not come as a surprise, but this newsletter is predominantly about providing an update of Covid procedures in school.

Changes from Term 2.

The current guidance for primary schools show that there have not been many changes from the end of Term 2. Where practicable we will continue to keep children in year group bubbles, we will continue to have lunch in classrooms, we will continue with the planned programme of before and after school clubs. We encourage regular lateral flow testing and if your child is ill or has any symptoms of Covid we recommend that they take a PCR test.

We are very grateful to the parents who have donated air filters into classrooms over this last month. We currently have 3 air filters and are looking to add more in the classrooms that would benefit from them. If any parents/members of the community would like to support the school in this endeavour with a donation of air filters then please contact the school office.

Positive cases and Isolation period.

The decision about when to isolate and for how long after a positive Covid PCR test is the responsibility of NHS Test and Trace. The latest guidance allows those persons who have positive Covid tests to return to school provided they have 2 negative lateral flow tests on day 6 and 7 of the isolation period and they do not have a high temperature. If positive cases cannot get access to lateral flow tests, they must remain isolated for the full 10 days.

Staff shortages.

In the last week of Term 2, we had to close the school to the Reception year group due to staff shortages. Clearly this was not an ideal scenario and I wish to thank the parents and carers of Reception children for their support and patience shown during that time.

Staff absences are always a challenge in schools. It is costly in terms of the disruption to children's learning, increased budgetary pressures and importantly, the wellbeing of staff who take the strain of their colleagues' absence.

For this academic year, we planned for the foreseeable scenario of higher than usual staff absence.

When a teaching member of staff is absent, we initially look to cover with known members of staff. We are fortunate to have 4 excellent teachers to call upon for some teacher absences. Mr Crowley, Mr Goad, Miss Allen and Mrs Taylor have scope within their teaching schedules to provide high quality cover. If they are not available we have a number of very experienced and highly valued support staff who can legally cover classes on a short term basis. When teaching support staff cover, it is with the understanding that they are being taken away from their primary teaching roles, which are specialised and important.

If our teachers or teaching support staff cannot cover, we look to get cover from supply agencies. The challenge last term has been that the supply agencies do not have the labour supply that they have had in the past. In November and December they were not able to provide teaching cover when required. Should the agencies not have any personnel, then a member of the leadership team can cover on a short term basis. As a final resort, if we cannot use any of the aforementioned options, we have asked all year groups from 1 to 6 to plan for children to go to different classes across the school for a day until adequate cover can be found. We will not deploy this option for our Reception or Nursery aged children.

We have enough internal capacity to cover up to 20-25% staff absence on any given day in school. However, once we have 30% of teaching staff absent, and with the supply agencies not being able to source teaching cover, we find ourselves in the very unfortunate position of not being able to provide the necessary level of adult supervision that would ensure that the children are safe in school. This was the scenario we found ourselves in before Christmas and it may be that we find ourselves in a similar scenario in the coming weeks. If that is the case, we will have no option but to provide remote learning for a class or year group until adequate cover can be found.

I hope this gives you some understanding of both our planning and the choices we face around staff absences. I hope that we have an uninterrupted term of teaching with all staff healthy and present, however if we do have to mix children into different classes, I know that we can count on your understanding and support.

And finally...

Whilst the tone of this Newsletter may suggest otherwise, I am really looking forward to the term ahead. I know that Year 1 will be on a trip to the Theatre this week and there will be much to excite and enthuse all children in all year groups over the coming term. You will hear from your Year group teachers via a newsletter by the end of the week with an update as to what topics are being covered and any other information you need and, as ever, you can check the school website for latest news and upcoming events.

I look forward to seeing you and the children tomorrow morning.

Dan Simson