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Harwell Community Primary School

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10th January 2021

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter finds you well.

That was an interesting week! By the end of it I felt a little like Solomon Grundy: Open on Monday, Closed on Tuesday, Both on Wednesday, Full by Thursday and Shattered by Friday. Fortunately, my weekend was certainly better than Solomon's! As I have written before, there is always a positive, if you look hard enough.

Thank you for your help in setting up remote learning and your patience, understanding and support through it all. I understand it is not going to be easy, nor straight forward but your positive words and emails have been much appreciated and shared with staff who have achieved so much in such a short time.

With every member of staff deployed, whether in school or supporting remotely, their time (and capacity) is extremely stretched. If you have any queries please do email the office and we will try to answer as soon as possible.

Marking and Feedback
With regards to marking and feedback, this has several roles.
- It feeds into the lesson planning process (so staff know the understanding of the children's prior learning) to enable appropriate pitch of learning.
- It supports the children's understanding so that they know what they need to do to improve.
This takes many different forms. It may be verbal, with the staff talking to the children about common misconceptions, direct questioning to elicit understanding or it may be written, with comments and next steps. The balance will be largely verbal as this immediate feedback (and assessment) is, as research shows, more effective. The children's online submissions will be viewed by the teacher and form part of the assessment for learning that feeds into the planning cycle. This will mean that much of the children's work will not have formal written feedback.

Critical Worker Places
The school is operating with around 35% of the pupils in class supported on-site by the learning support assistants (while the teaching staff teach remotely).

Places in school for critical worker children are finite and we would ask that you only take up a place if absolutely necessary. As a community, we must ensure that there is space for our healthcare workers' children and other vital roles that are actively helping us fight the pandemic. Places are at a premium and we are at capacity in most of our classes.

I would like to remind parents that even if you are a critical worker the guidance states that:
Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.
Thank you for your help with this.

Devices
Over the week, the school has been loaning out devices. We have initially prioritised families without any devices. Thank you to those families and community members who have donated laptops.

Our next priority is to support families where there are too few devices between siblings. We have initially supported this by trying to avoid timetable clashes. The school has also taken the decision to bring forward our replacement timetable for purchasing new Chromebooks. This will allow us to loan out some of our older Chromebooks (which still work well). If you are a family that would benefit from a Chromebook loan, please let us know and we will do our best to support your child's learning through a device loan.

Pupil Wellbeing
With the current lockdown, I am concerned about pupil isolation and the impact on their wellbeing of not seeing their friends in a social situation.
For this reason, I am looking at the logistics of creating some social meets on a Friday afternoon. This would be an opportunity for the children to meet in their classes with a social focus, to chat and share thoughts with their friends. The meeting would be optional. Once I finalise the logistics, I will email out details.

Please enjoy the rest of your weekend and stay safe.

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,

Bryn Gibson