



Harwell Community Primary School

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Dear Parents,

I hope you are keeping safe and well.

It has been an interesting week for us all.

On Sunday, I closed the Year 5 class, due to a positive case within the school and on Monday, I closed year 6, for the same reason.

Fortunately, the additional tests taken have not revealed any more positive cases so I will be reopening both classes once their isolation period has finished on Sunday.

While you may have read in the news, that nationally around 20% of primary children are in school (Oxfordshire are currently 18%) the school is running at between 28-39%, depending on the day. To be able to staff this safely and run remote learning is a challenge. Typically, I have my support staff in school supporting the in-school learning and the teaching staff at home, remote teaching to all. This week, at times I had 10 staff unavailable to support in school.

However, on the positive note, all the staff pulled together and we managed to keep the school open, for which I am deeply grateful. Fortunately, in addition, we have some student teachers from Oxford Brookes in school this week (all pre-tested and COVID safe) who have helped keep the school open.

Yesterday morning, the Secretary for Education, Gavin Williams, made some interesting remarks in an interview, which are important to share. He said on Radio 4, that he 'hoped that schools would be open by Easter.'

This suggests that school will be closed to most pupils for the foreseeable future, and longer than the half-term that was originally planned by ministers.

Gavin Williams also said that he would like to give schools two weeks notice of reopening, which, if it happens, will be helpful in the reopening planning and give us all more clarity.

I understand that this news is a blow. We all want children back at school as quickly as possible but it needs to be at a time when it is safe to do so.

Having half the class in school and half at home is not an easy juggling act. We want to ensure that all children have the same learning opportunities, as far as possible. In that way, the children will be at the same place when they return to school, with fewer gaps in learning (whenever that will be).

We understand the challenges of remote learning for you too. We are grateful for the feedback given. We are constantly looking at how we can make learning as effective as possible and whilst keeping the quality that we strive for, balancing with the manageability for working parents. We will give you advance notice of any changes we make so that you can plan these into your routines. Thank you for your tremendous support with your child's learning. You are doing an amazing job.

You may have also heard about mass testing at schools. Primary School staff are now included in this. This will mean that school staff, who wish to, will be able to test themselves twice a week to try to identify asymptomatic cases.

The tests will be Lateral Flow Tests. If a staff member tests positive, the school will follow our procedures, including potential class closures. Staff will have to have a second PCR test to verify the results. If the PCR test is negative, the isolation ends and if positive, the isolation will continue.

The LFT may lead to more class closures but on an important positive note, it will also support reducing community transmission.

We have had a delivery of additional Chromebooks and so can now lend more out. If your children are sharing a device, please do get in touch as we may be able to help.

Thank you all for your amazing support both of the school and your children's learning.

Warm regards,

Mr Gibson