

4th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wanted to update you with the most recent developments in school as guided by the government in this lockdown period.

Half Term Arrangements

Schools have not been directed to remain open during the February half term and as such, Hookstone Chase will be closed in the holiday. We will be posting out vouchers for families who are in receipt of free school meals. Should you need support over the half term, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Mrs Peacock, our Pastoral Leader, to discuss how we can help.

Lateral Flow Testing for Staff

All staff and essential visitors who access our school site, now have the option to be tested for Covid twice a week with lateral flow tests. These tests are aimed at capturing asymptomatic cases and will help us add a further layer of safety to the school. We will test in school staff each Sunday and Wednesday evening in order that I can give families fair warning if we have to make alternative arrangements for any classes if positive tests are recorded. I will contact families initially via text on Sunday and Wednesday evenings around 7pm. No news is good news! Children are not part of the testing process at this stage.

School Places and Remote Learning

The government has issued more guidance for schools and I want to share some of that information with you. I hope it will clarify the decisions we are making as a school. The Prime Minister has set out, in his statement to Parliament on 27 January, 'that whilst our efforts so far do appear to have reduced the R rate, we cannot relax measures too soon, because if we do we run the risk of our NHS coming under still greater pressure. We must therefore continue to limit school attendance to help to support the reduction in the overall number of social contacts in our communities, which is a vital intervention in the context of current high prevalence of Covid-19.' On average only 5% of secondary school pupils and 20% of primary school pupils are attending at present.' However, at Hookstone Chase we already have over 30% of children accessing the school provision. Our school risk assessment and staff capacity will mean we have to make some difficult decisions about not being able to agree requests for school places.

We have a significant number of key worker places being taken up and we are asking that where any adult is at home, even if they are working from home, that they keep their children at home and access the remote teaching. This is the safest place for children. In addition to children of key workers, we also provide places for children who are deemed vulnerable. The definition of vulnerable children and young people includes children who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or who may be vulnerable for another reason at local discretion. Unfortunately, children being at home will be extremely challenging for families and I know how hard you are all working. Unfortunately, I cannot offer children places if they have an adult carer and are able to access the remote learning or be provided with a suitable alternative to meet their needs. Your class teachers will be able to support you with home learning. We will contact you regularly to offer support and advice if your child is at home and not accessing remote learning.

There will be no punishments in place for children or families who do not access the remote learning. There will certainly be days where your child will feel overly challenged to access everything on offer. We just want you to try your best to get your children on line and where you cannot, please let the class teacher know so that we know everything is ok at home. We are regularly reviewing our Remote Learning offer and will be asking for your feedback on how well it is working for your child.

Public Health England Guidance

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) works with school to guide us through the actions they need to take. Based on their advice, schools must send home those people who have been in close

contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive. Close contact means:

- anyone who lives in the same household as someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) with a PCR or LFD test:
 - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
 - sexual contacts
 - been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
 - travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

To remain open as a school, we must keep our staff safe and reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. Adhering to Public Health England guidance above, we would ask that we now stop with face-to-face meetings in the playground at the start and end of the day. To support you with any concerns, we would be grateful if you used the class email or contact school via the telephone. We can make arrangements for face to face Teams calls if your prefer. Government guidance ('Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools') recommends that 'Schools should ensure that they do not allow gathering at the school gates.' Please do not think this is being rude or avoiding you. We miss our interactions with our families but we have a job to keep our school safe and so we will be trying to clear the playground as soon as we can at pick up and drop off. We will however, be available every day by phone, email or Teams.

Re-opening schools to all pupils

In the week commencing 22 February, the Government intends to publish a plan for taking the country out of lockdown. The aim will be to set out a gradual and phased approach towards easing the restrictions in a sustainable way, guided by the principles that have been observed throughout the pandemic, beginning with the most important principle of all: that re-opening schools must be our national priority. The government has committed to providing schools with a minimum of two weeks' notice for this return to on-site provision. Additional pupils and students will therefore return to on-site education on 8 March 2021 **at the earliest**.

Testing and SATS

The Department of Education recognises that due to the further disruption caused by school closures, primary assessments cannot continue as intended. They will therefore cancel the statutory key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests and teacher assessments planned for summer 2021, including the key stage 2 tests in reading and mathematics. We have arrangements in place to assess where children are in their learning and will be able to share this information with secondary schools with ease. We will also work very hard on providing smooth transition for all our children to get them to the next stage in their education. As skilled teachers, we do not need the validation of a test result to know where children are in the learning journey so please do not worry about the removal of SATs and other tests this year.

Educational visits and residential trips

School visits are advised against at this time and we will keep this under review with the Department of Education guidance.

School Uniform

School uniform may be worn if families prefer. However, as we have moved to an extensively outdoor curriculum (to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus) and because we have to have classrooms well-ventilated, families may prefer to send their children in their own clothes. Please ensure their outfits are warm, easily washable and do not have slogans or any inappropriate images on them. If children are in school uniform, we recommend a warm second jumper or fleece for use in classrooms.

Covid Catch up Funding

You may be aware that the government has provided some additional funding for schools to support children in their learning. Details of how we are currently allocating this funding is available on our school website 'Covid Catch up plan.' This has been shared with, and ratified by, our Board of Governors.

Wrap Around Care

We are confident we will be able to offer wrap around care when school reopens to all children. I will contact families directly with details of this provision as soon as the new wrap around care provider is in place.

Well done and thank you!

The longer we are in lockdown the more challenging it will be for us. Families are stepping up like never before and we are proud of your response to this lockdown. Keep going and keep us in mind if you need a chat or a shoulder to cry on. There is much to be positive about with the vaccination programme being rolled out at a pace and, whilst we still have a way to go, there is light at the end of the tunnel. As the late great Captain Sir Tom Moore said, 'I would like us all to stand shoulder to shoulder – metaphorically! Let's try not to get downhearted, we will get through this, whatever is thrown at us and together we can ensure that tomorrow will be a good day.' May he rest in peace and inspire us all to remain strong and united in our fight against this virus.

Kindest regards,



Miss Watson