

Preston Grange Primary School

Newsletter – January 5th 2021



Dear families

Last night, the Prime Minister confirmed the re-introduction of a lockdown in response to rising infection rates and concerns about the new Coronavirus variant. As in the previous lockdown, vulnerable children and the children of critical workers are eligible to attend school.

The list of eligible critical worker roles is extensive and, towards the end of the previous lockdown, the government encouraged parents to take full advantage of this eligibility. This coincided with the point where the curve had been flattened, community transmission had been suppressed to very low levels and the government were trying to move out of lockdown.

We fully appreciate the pressures which parents will now be experiencing. However, at this early stage when the curve is climbing steeply, community transmission is increasing and there is a new, more easily spread variant, I am appealing to parents/carers to exercise caution before they send their child to school under the eligibility of a child of a critical worker.

The overriding message from the government is to "**STAY AT HOME**". If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be. If you or another parent/carer are at home (including working from home), please keep your child safely at home and access remote learning. Unlike in the last lockdown childcare (ie. Grandparents) support bubbles are allowed and these should be considered if possible.

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, and you cannot keep your child safe at home, then your child is eligible to attend school. However we have been contacted by well over 100 parents this morning to request access to this provision.

As I outlined in my recent letter, I have a limited number of staff available for work due to shielding and absence. I would be grateful if parents could consider carefully even if you are eligible for a key worker place, whether you need to take up this place or whether you are able to keep your child at home (ie. if one parent is working from home). Otherwise I am concerned that this provision will be capped due to staffing capacity.

Whilst the school has a number of measures in place which have kept pupils and staff as safe as possible to this point, at this early stage of the lockdown, keeping the number of pupils attending school as low as possible is a vitally important additional, new measure in order to protect the health of children, their critical worker parents and families and the staff at our school.

If numbers attending school remain high, this counteracts the primary aim of the lockdown which is to reduce the transmission, protect the NHS and save lives. Ultimately, this will allow the return of all pupils to school at the earliest opportunity.

Transmission is also more likely in larger groups and this will increase the likelihood of a bubble of children needing to isolate, should they have been in close contact with a confirmed case.

I would be grateful if you would please consider that teaching staff will be juggling the demands of teaching pupils attending school as well as those completing remote learning at home. Keeping numbers low at school allows teaching staff to give more time to support and feedback to fellow classmates that are learning at home.

Finally, for your information, if your child has a place in the key worker provision, they will be completing remote learning at school, the exact same learning as the children at home will be completing.

Thank you for your previous support in relation to the measures we have introduced in school (ie. masks on site) Hopefully, once the vaccination process is well underway we will see restrictions lifted and a safe return to school for all.

Google Classroom

We need all parents to work with us to ensure that a move to remote learning runs smoothly in order for the children to continue with their learning and reading. We understand that as parents that many of you will be working from home and some parents may find supporting their child accessing Google Classroom challenging. We are here to help & support you, and will provide the resources and help so that everyone feels comfortable with the new way of learning remotely.

It is an expectation that all children complete their daily remote learning and ask that parents support us with this. School is providing a guide to Google Classroom for parents and one also for children; these may both be found on the front page of our website.

We have texted all parents the class code that you will require in order to get started with remote learning. You will need this in addition to the login details for your child. We can see which children have not accessed Google Classroom before now, and we have re-emailed out all login details for parents who have not yet accessed it.

Our remote learning plan

Our remote learning plan has been made with our pupils and their families in mind. We believe that this strategy will work best for the children at our school.

Now that we are in Tier 5 and children are at home due to an enforced wider school closure, a range of pre-recorded, live and existing resources e.g. Oak Academy or BBC Bitesize will be used as part of our school's offer. Children will have daily Maths and English teaching (pre-recorded), some live online sessions e.g. Shared Reading/ Castles (PHSE) as well as access to wider curriculum activities.

All lessons, activities and learning resources will be accessed through Google Classroom (please refer to our Google Classroom guide for how to access this)

We are using a range of live, pre recorded and uploaded activities so that pupils can access learning using a flexible timetable that suits parents schedules and technology demands between siblings.

Children will be contacted by their teachers via Google Classroom starting Wednesday 6th January. The work will be uploaded at 8.30am each morning ready for children to access.

Children will receive a range of feedback (in line with our school Feedback Policy) in order to motivate and support their learning. Please note that your child should complete their daily work by 2pm (Maths & English) if they are to receive feedback in the next day's video. All children will receive one written feedback comment in English & Maths per week.

What you'll need at home

- A device that can access the internet, such as a laptop, desktop computer, tablet or smartphone.
- We will be sending home an exercise book for Maths, English and Wider Curriculum work. These may be collected from under the Early Years canopy tomorrow in between the hours of 10am and 3pm. This is so that parents do not need to print anything and children can complete tasks in these books. When a task is completed a photograph or file can be uploaded for the teacher to see.
- We recommend a quiet space for your child to learn with minimal distractions.
- Once your child is set up for the day they should be able to complete work relatively independently but may need prompting to keep on task, rewatch or reread the material on Google Classroom

What we expect from your child

It's essential that your child engages with home learning and completes the daily activities set.

If they aren't engaging with the learning, we'll use the following strategies to provide additional support:

- Phone call home
- Increased encouragement

What you can do to help

We appreciate that if this situation arises, it may present some challenges for you. We need your support so that we can continue to provide high-quality education for your child and your child continues to make progress during this time.

Younger children in particular may need support in accessing online materials and staying focused with their remote learning. We ask that you help them as much as you can.

At the same time, we don't expect you to watch your child all day; and we wouldn't expect parents/carers to get involved in remote lessons in place of our teachers. But, it would be really helpful if you can take an active role in your child's learning by asking them about their day and what they've learned.

Our top tips:

- Try to encourage your child to be ready and dressed for the start of the school day, and as in a normal school day keep devices and games for when school work is completed
- Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, and make it clear when the school day is over, to separate home and school life
- Plan breaks and exercise into the day to help keep your child active
- Please keep in touch with us and do let us know if you're having any difficulties with remote learning, or if you have any questions. You can contact office@pgps.co.uk

Free school meals

Children who are currently eligible for free school meals will receive a weekly food hamper which will be delivered to school. We will contact families when these are sent to school. Hampers will contain a variety of food including fresh fruit and vegetables. Children who are in school will receive a packed lunch from tomorrow. These will be delivered to schools on a daily basis.

THANK YOU

This has been a VERY busy and stressful day for both school and families. None of us wanted this situation; we were so happy that we were opening to all children. Thank you very much for bearing with us, and for your ongoing support. For those families who have emailed the school office, please understand that due to the extremely high volume of emails, calls, enquiries and questions, responses are, and will be brief. The office hours are 8.30am until 4.30pm. Thank you for your understanding.

Tracey Taylor
Headteacher

January 5th 2021