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Dear Parents and Carers,

This week has been a whirlwind and has required our whole Grange family to adapt quickly to the changes imposed on us by the government. It was not how I expected my first week at Grange to be! Although it has been an incredibly challenging week for staff, parents and children, it has demonstrated how supportive we all are of each other. I would like to thank the parents I have spoken to on the yard, phone and via email for their kind words; you have made me feel so welcome.

There is a lot to update you on this week; I promise not all newsletters will be this long! You might need to make yourself a coffee before you start reading!

On Monday evening, we were told that we would be closed from Tuesday until at least February half term. The rising numbers of infections and deaths meant that the whole country had to return to lock down. As a Headteacher, I have a responsibility to all of our families to keep them safe and I have the same responsibility to our fantastic staff. The message to "Stay Home and Save Lives" was loud and clear.

The government started off by telling us that "critical worker and vulnerable" children could come to school. We had about 150 children who needed a place in school. That is about 40% of our school population. The government only gave us 13 hours to organise this which is why we had to close school on Tuesday to give us a chance to sort out who was eligible for a place. I am still receiving requests from parents for their children to have a place in school.

The government produced new guidance last night, 3 days after their initial announcement. Their guidance is confusing and often contradictory. They have instructed schools to open for the children of all critical workers while insisting that we must teach small groups of children. To do this, we would need to open up more classes and have all our teachers in school doing face to face teaching. They also require us to deliver high quality remote education that allows us to interact with pupils and give regular feedback. If all our teachers are in school teaching, it becomes impossible to provide high quality remote learning. I am also worried that if I did increase numbers in school, I decrease the safety of our school community and reduce the number of people who can stay "Stay at home and save lives".



The government have told us that children should be spaced out in a classroom. We already have classes of 15 pupils that are sitting one per desk and so in my mind these classrooms are full. I am now having to tell key workers that they cannot have a place in school.

I know that in an ideal world, you would all want your child in school. We all want them here as well. But at this difficult time, I would ask you to consider whether you really need a place or whether you can follow government guidelines and “Stay at home and save lives”. This is safest option for everyone at the moment.

Please could I ask families where you are critical workers to do the following this weekend?

- If your child has been given a critical worker place in school, and you could keep them at home, please email me to relinquish your place.
- If you desperately need a critical worker place in school and haven't been given one, please email me today or over the weekend. You will need to include the occupation of both parents and the address of your employers. Please indicate which days of the week you would need your child to be in school.
- In all emails, please state the name and year group of your child.



Covid Risk Assessment

We have reviewed our risk assessment in light of the new variant with the staff and Governors. I hope to publish this on the school website next week.

Home and School Learning

In most year groups, one of the teachers and LSAs will teach the 15 pupils in school while the other teacher and LSA will provide the home learning and feedback for the remaining 45 pupils that week. The following week, the staff will swap over.

Home learning will mirror what is being taught in school and although home learning, can never be the same as interacting with your teacher in class, we are striving to make it as equitable as possible; the content of the lessons will be the same. I am incredibly proud of how quickly the teachers managed to produce home learning for all our pupils this week and I thank them for this. Children at home can expect to receive a welcome video every morning, followed by a daily challenge, some physical exercise, an English, maths and topic lesson and finally a story and end of the day video on Tapestry or Seesaw. The teacher not working in school, will respond to work on Tapestry and Seesaw for the whole year group. Please note that this may not be your child's class teacher. If you would like feedback on work set, please upload it before 4pm otherwise it may be the next day before a member of staff sees it.

If you have any technical difficulties with Tapestry or Seesaw, please email your child's class teacher and not the main



school office. We are aware that there have been a number of technical issues this week. This has been out of our control at school and is no doubt due to the high levels of demand on these platforms across the country.

Responding to Parent Feedback

We have already listened to some early feedback from parents regarding home learning. During the last lockdown, parents were very positive about the whole school working on the same topic for afternoon lessons. We have chosen the theme of South America for the first two weeks and although the teaching is different according to the age of the child, we hope parents find this easier to manage if they have more than one child doing home learning.

On Wednesday, we were uploading the videos and lessons separately online. Parents told us that they felt overwhelmed with the amount of material for each day so we are now going to condense the material so that there are less activities to open and navigate.

We understand that everyone's situation at home is different and many parents are trying to juggle working from home and supporting their child with learning. Parents have asked us to upload everything in the morning rather than at intervals through the day so that they can choose when to do it. We have responded to this immediately.

I have already received lots of positive comments about the home learning we are providing. Thank you for this.

I have two children at home and know how difficult it can be to support children with their home learning. While it is incredibly important for them to keep up with their school work, please be kind to yourself too. If you have a bad day and don't get through all of the work, don't worry. Teachers may contact you if we don't see you on Tapestry or Seesaw for a few days, to check that everything is okay.

No Book Bags

Children attending school should NOT bring books and books to school from Monday. The new variant is transmitted far more readily so we are trying to reduce what is brought from home in to school. Please read books from Oxford Reading Buddy with your child at home.

School Meal Vouchers

If you are eligible for free school meals and your child is not attending school during lockdown, you should have received your first voucher this week. The value of the vouchers has decreased to £12 per child from £15 because these are no longer being subsidised by the Government. Next week, you will receive one voucher which will cover the next five weeks i.e. 5 X £12 = £60. This takes us up to the February half term holiday.

Thank you for getting to the bottom of this newsletter. Have a good weekend.

Clare Clougher
Headteacher



