



Dear Parents and Carers

Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times

This is an important newsletter as it comes at something of a watershed moment in light of the Prime Minister's announcement in the house of Commons yesterday afternoon, that the earliest possible opening date for our schools would be the 8th March. This comes with the caveat that any full school opening would be dependent on several factors, including: a steady fall in transmission rates of the virus, the continued successful roll out of the vaccine to meet projected targets for the four most vulnerable categories, and a significant alleviation of the pressures on our fantastic NHS. As we await more detail on a proposed 'road map' for our return, we at least have a more secure understanding of how much longer we will all have to navigate our way through partial school closure and the immense and challenging shift to Remote Learning.

We want to begin this letter by acknowledging the tide of frustration and sadness parents are feeling for all the lost opportunities of childhood. We all crave to once again see children interact socially

without looking over their shoulders. Teachers and parents alike are yearning for children to be able to learn face to face, collaborate on ideas, problem solve together and celebrate each other's endeavours. Most of all – we just want our children to be carefree.

Although all these things are not yet possible, in school we are absolutely committed to trying to find a balance between providing face to face learning for children of critical workers, whilst also sharing meaningful opportunities to learn online. It cannot be the same as learning as a community in the classroom, but it can still be purposeful, joyful, inspiring, rich in meaning and strong in connectedness.



Online Learning Survey

Many of you have taken the time to respond to our online learning survey and have tried to express some of the challenges of orchestrating learning at home. We hear you. A good number of you also took the time to express gratitude and that has come as a boost for teachers who are walking an educational landscape that only months ago would have been inconceivable. The learning curve for teachers, parents and children alike has been extraordinary and we applaud all your efforts whilst also acknowledging the struggles.

Key Points of Feedback from the Survey

Parent Voice	Our Response
<p>Most parents said that the balance of work set was 'about right' but some parents expressed concerns that some of the tasks were 'too much' or taking a long time to work through.</p>	<p>We would like to reassure parents that if children are struggling with or spending too long on a task, it is ok to just do their best and submit the outcome. Their teacher knows their capabilities and will be nurturing/encouraging with feedback. Teachers will always recognise effort.</p> <p>We have also reflected on breaking down some tasks – especially in English at KS2 - so children work on 'bite-size' pieces each day which build to a complete outcome.</p> <p>Teachers are also very mindful that parents might feel under pressure to make sure that a child's work is 'perfect' before submitting it. This is not the case. We do need children to buy in to the standards we expect of their year group and commit to trying their best. But equally, we need to see where the child is struggling or has a misconception so we can address it in the feedback. Equally, if you have a KS1 child who is applying their phonics, but a spelling is not quite how we would spell a word, as long as their attempt is phonetically plausible, it shows that the child is applying learning that is appropriate to their stage of development. Please don't worry about correcting it.</p> <p>In short – we are so grateful to parents for supporting and encouraging their children. Motivation and an appropriate learning environment are key to them being able to focus. Please do not feel that you need to 'polish' your child's attempts as long as they have truly tried their best. Just celebrate their effort and the teachers will focus feedback on achievement and next steps.</p>
<p>Without exception, parents have said that the weekly 'live' Teams sessions are something of a 'lifeline' for children who are desperate for interaction with their peers and teachers. We also understand how important they are. Some parents requested that these be upped to daily check-ins.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, we do not have capacity for this as teachers also need to teach in class, as well as set up lessons for each subsequent day and feedback to any outcomes that are submitted. This all takes a great deal of time and care.</p>
<p>Nationally and locally, we are aware of a tide of frustration that teachers in some schools are not delivering 'live' lessons through Teams. Again, there are a number of reasons why Aspire do not endorse this and neither is it promoted by Ofsted as a recommended approach.</p>	<p>Safeguarding is a huge issue here as a live link into homes could open up risks and vulnerabilities to both children and teachers. Equity of access is another critical factor here, and in all that we do, we have one eye on equality of provision for all children. To the best of our knowledge, all families have indicated that they have some form of device with which to access learning.</p>

	<p>For those families sharing one device or with poor internet connection, 'live' lessons would be a significant barrier to access and would cause further stress. If you are a family who is still struggling to access an effective device, please do contact the school. We are here to help.</p> <p>We have discussed this need for greater teacher presence and teachers will continue to make sure their presence is felt increasingly both visually and vocally through pre-recorded lessons. Every child should have regular visual and verbal contact with their teacher through pre-recorded welcomes, learning sequences and feedback. The 'live' Teams group sessions will continue to be timetabled weekly for the duration.</p>
<p>Some parents expressed the wish for the Remote Learning to be accessible from an earlier time due to the children being up and ready in the morning.</p>	<p>In light of this, from Monday 1st February, all work will be scheduled from 8am. We still recommend that your children stagger the activities throughout the day to ensure they have breaks and time away from the screen.</p>
<p>Many parents alluded to the impact of this particular period of closure on their child's mental health. The year has almost come full circle since the first awareness of the virus, and here we are still locked into these challenging historical events.</p>	<p>We would like to reassure parents that we are all too aware of the impact of these times on the hearts and minds of young people – and in fact on us all. A key focus for Aspire and our schools on the return of children into school, will be to address this head-on and shape a curriculum offer with children's wellbeing at the heart.</p> <p>There will be a long-term commitment to rebuilding all those social and emotional bonds, a focus on opportunities for joy and delight in each other's company and all this alongside our continued endeavours to recapture children's natural hunger and curiosity for learning, to rebuild their confidence and begin to bring them back on track. We are under no illusion that this will take time.</p>

Other Important Information

Lateral Flow Testing

Our staff now have the option to participate in this programme in order to further mitigate the risk of transmission of the virus by staff who may be asymptomatic. This is a positive step but not without potential challenges since a positive test could trigger the closure of a pod at short notice. We will notify any parents of children affected by this as soon as we can and keep you updated as we receive information.

February Half Term

The DFE have now confirmed that schools will close as usual over February half-term and are not expected to remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week. Following this guidance, we would like to confirm that school will be closed for this period.



INSET Days

As you will be aware, both the 11th and 12th February are INSET days for our school, and we have valuable training planned in for staff. The school will be closed to all pupils on both days other than for exceptional circumstances where parents who are critical workers or parents of vulnerable children have no other option due to work commitments. Please could you contact the office by Friday 5th February if your child needs to be in school on this day. Similarly, teachers will not be posting learning on-line for those days. We do believe it will give children some time away from their screens and pave the way for what we hope will be a restful half term break for everyone. Families will also need this time as some respite from the pressures of remote learning.

In Celebration of Our Children

Throughout these strange times, the one thing that lights up an ordinary day is the extraordinary contributions of the children. We see this every day in the honest endeavour of their posts, their quirky comments, and their smiles. It makes everything worthwhile for us. We hope you relish those moments too. Please do continue to reassure your children that we hold them very much in our thoughts, and like them, we cannot wait to be together again. Please do follow us on social media for glimpses of beautiful learning at home and in school.

FSM Voucher

For those that are in receipt of Free School Meals, you should now be receiving a weekly email from Edenred containing your voucher information. If your circumstances have changed and you feel that you may be entitled to Free School Meals, please apply using the following link: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/school-meals/application-for-free-school-meals-and-pupil-premium/>

Best wishes



Sue Cox and the team



Key Dates

Wednesday 10 th February	Last day of Term 3
Thursday 11 th February	INSET
Friday 12 th February	INSET
Monday 22 nd February	First day of Term 4 for critical workers
Thursday 1 st April	Last day of Term 4
Monday 19 th April	First day of Term 5
Monday 3 rd May	May Bank Holiday – school closed
Friday 28 th May	Last day of Term 5
Monday 7 th June	First day of Term 6
Friday 11 th June	Inset Day – school closed
Monday 28 th to Wednesday 30 th June	Y4/5 Porthpean Residential
Thursday 8 th July	SJS Y6 Transition Day
Thursday 22 nd July	Last day of Term 6