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Mr Blackmore's Friday Briefing

Dear Parents/ Carers,

During the first lockdown, I tried to unite the in-school provision and the families engaged in homeschooling by writing a weekly newsletter. If nothing else, it allows me to mark the end of each week as we count down to being able to come back together as a school. I hope it is useful...

A Thank You...

In all my years in education, I have never seen a school community pull together as we all did in the first part of this week. With such little notice, we changed direction and moved to remote learning for the majority and in-school provision for others. Whether you were frantically completing applications for critical worker places or battling with Google Classroom (as were we...), each and every one of you have done such a good job. All the Facebook messages and emails have been very much appreciated but also, I want to thank you for your part in making this week as successful as possible, in the circumstances.

Remote Learning

As a parent I am also negotiating my way through remote learning so know just what you are facing; it is challenging to say the least! Many children are very different at home to how they are in school and this can often manifest in stressful scenarios. My advice is to be kind to yourselves. One of the main concepts of the remote learning policy is that by providing the timetable for each day, we are holding the children to account for the learning in that day, rather than you. This is an essential difference to the previous lockdown and one that, I hope, will support the home-school process and will avoid confrontation and conflict.

Having said this, the timetable can be daunting in itself. You know your child best so will be able to best judge when to stick to the timetable and when to stop, miss a session perhaps, before joining again later. Reading, creative play, exercise, conversation, games and puzzles are all just as valuable as other activities offered on Google Classroom so don't feel guilty if the children are enjoying being in the garden rather than joining their afternoon session on Google Classroom.

We have to find a way of getting through this period of time. If struggles persist, let us know and we will help.

Technology

You would have seen in the news that technology is a hot-topic at the moment and rightly so. We have only been allocated 15 devices from the government, with 5 of those yet to arrive. Such an allocation doesn't entirely reflect the needs of our community. We are sending out on our own devices, through a loan agreement, and have had a couple of donations. If you are struggling to engage with our remote learning offer due to limited technology, please email the office or your child's class teacher/phase leader. We will try our best to help.



I am also working with The Oak Partnership to deliver on the offer of support with broadband and data for families that you may also have seen in the press; more on this next week as we find out more.

Critical Worker Places

We have seen an increase demand for places compared to the first lockdown. At the moment, our current arrangement can run as advertised but I must express that although a full week's place is allocated to each pupil of an accepted critical worker, **please, please only use us when necessary.**

The guidance for schools (07/01/21) is clear that children of critical workers should remain at home. Attending school should only be a last resort although we do know that for some families, our provision is essential to the coronavirus response.

Schools are safe as they can be but the closure enables community transmission to be reduced as much as possible, and therefore becomes in the best interests of public health. In a time of increasing transmission in the local area, we need daily numbers to be as low as possible. We thank you for your support with this.

Nursery

Whilst schools have closed, nurseries have been asked to remain fully open. This had caused some initial anxiety with our nursery staff but, as with the school staff, they have demonstrated their commitment to the care of the children and have worked tirelessly to ensure a sense of normality remains. We are proud of our school and nursery provision and are proud to serve our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to, once again, thank you all and I'll look forward to writing again next week with further items of interest and reminders.

Best wishes

James Blackmore
Headteacher

