

Harleston C.E. Primary Academy

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Interim Headteacher: Mrs M Foreman

1st May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

It simply does not seem possible that today is the 1st of May - a day that is more frequently associated with fun and revelry and in folklore takes us back to the ancient Celts as it represented the first day of summer and was celebrated with bonfires to welcome in the new season. Schools still celebrate with dancing around maypoles and of course some villages still crown a May Queen as Morris dancers leap, rattle and jingle their happy way in many a market square.

How different is today's May 1st compared to many that have gone before? I do hope that in some way you have been able to have a positive and fun May Day celebration of your own.

Our childcare for the children of Key and Critical workers has continued throughout the whole period of lockdown and I am very grateful to all the parents who have followed the protocols for social distancing at drop off and pick up times. Having said that, it has been lovely to have a chance for us to see you and have brief chats each day. We are open as usual next week from Monday to Thursday but will not be providing child care on bank holiday Friday. I am sure you would agree that our staff have been wonderful in providing the children a safe and happy environment every day. The highlight of the day, as ever, remains our shared family lunch with delicious hot meals cooked by Mrs Johnson as we all sit spread around the dining hall chatting together.

Thank you to everyone who has continued to help their children with home learning. We have seen far more children posting work this week and lots of very positive and thankful comments from parents. If schools do not return fully till September (or later) any children not doing any or very little home learning will be incredibly behind where they need to be and will have missed out so much on some of the fantastic things their classmates are doing. It could be 6 months with no schooling for these children which does not sound horrible until we, as teachers, think about how much progress children make in half a year. We will continue to be in contact with families who are struggling with home learning and offer them different kinds of support to get their children able to take part in Google Classroom or Tapestry.

School and nursery places for September - letters have been sent out to parents of all children who applied for places at the school. We sincerely hope that these children will be joining our school family, even if their start is delayed.

This week Mrs Beaumont has run an excellent initiative for children to write cards to Blake's Mum, Victoria Watson who is a critical care nurse at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. An amazing number of children (and their families) made cards and these were passed on (at a very safe distance) to her this morning. Thanks from all of us here for every one of you who took part in this lovely gesture to show how much you all care. Ms Watson sent a message back to us in school and said, 'Thank you all so much! Words cannot describe how grateful I am for this and it is so thoughtful of you all... some days at work are good seeing people recover, other days not quite so good. But brighter days are to come and today is a very bright day receiving this!'

It goes without saying that we are proud of Mrs Beaumont, every family who showed their love and Ms Watson for being both the best nurse she can be and the best mum she can be.



For those of you staying in at home (with the children) you may be interested in finding out more about some free online courses that the government launched yesterday - aimed at helping people develop workplace skills. Adults are given access to free digital and numeracy courses to help build up their skills, progress in work and boost their job prospects. I've had a brief look at the website and it looks really interesting - the digital skills part has courses on using social media, coding, programming and digital marketing. There are some courses there that I would like to do!! In addition to the training, there are also very useful pages on advice for furloughed workers, what to do if you lose your job and other links to free courses. You can find out more at www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course/the-skills-toolkit

Another source of help for you at home while you are supporting your child with their learning is Starline. (www.starline.org.uk) Although this was set up to provide advice over the telephone (03303139162) for parents who are concerned about their child's learning, a new initiative launched this week is a weekly YouTube series that explores aspects of parenting, education and home learning in a 15 minute 'conversation' every Wednesday between 8.30 am and 8.45 am led by education and parenting experts. Joe Wicks follows on nicely from this time slot! The first episode can be accessed via the website or by searching for Starlive Episode 1 on YouTube.

If you listened to or watched the prime minister on Thursday you will know that he reinforced the message that getting children back into schools is something that serious thought is being given to but will not take place until the five key tests are satisfied. As you know from my last update to you, I am not in favour of children being rushed back into schools. Classrooms and learning will look different when we all return to school. It is important to plan for a gradual return of pupils into school and this to be managed in a way where parents have a choice of whether they want their children to be part of this return or for it to be delayed. I know many of you will be very fearful about the prospect of children returning to school while there are still high numbers of people in hospital suffering from Covid-19. When we are given a date for schools to reopen, I will make sure we have planned thoroughly for the movement of children, staff and parents round the school site, timings for break and lunchtimes revised to avoid large groups of children being together, PPE considerations made, supply of hand sanitiser in every room, cleaning of toys in early years and nursery as well as cleaning computers, music equipment, pencils, crayons etc. the layout of classrooms sorted for social distancing etc. etc.

The government will need to give me confidence that COVID testing and PPE are widely and securely available so that I know I will be opening up a site that is safe and secure for everyone. Please rest assured I listen and hear your concerns and will make Harleston Primary Academy a safe place for every child and staff member and will not reopen the school until I can guarantee it is safe to do so.

I hope that we get a speedy return to warm and dry weather. I have had quite enough of my lawn being watered now and I didn't enjoy driving home last night in a hailstorm!!!!

My thanks once again for all your kind words and support for the school staff over recent days.

With Kind Regards



Mary Foreman
Interim Headteacher