

Harleston C.E. Primary Academy

School Lane, Harleston, Norfolk. IP20 9HG

Tel: (01379) 852302 / 853211

E-mail: office@harleston.stbenets.org

Website: www.harleston.stbenets.org



Interim Headteacher: Mrs M Foreman

4th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carers,

Headteacher update

This week has been one of the more interesting ones in the life of the school as we have moved from having a small number of children on site in our childcare for key workers and vulnerable pupils to having many more staff and children everywhere across the school in their separate 'pods'.

On Wednesday morning after two days of training for a different way of working and getting the rooms ready, staff were nervous, but tremendously excited by the prospect of seeing children for learning once more. I'm sure there were also lots of very nervous children and their parents too as all those coming back to school found out where the new entrances were, the routes they had to take round the school to get to the classrooms and finally, where they had to go to leave the school site.

Thankfully everyone's nervousness went away when teachers and children greeted each other with such happy smiles and the whole school was filled with a sense of joy - something that had been so sadly missed over the weeks since lockdown began. The school was bright, vibrant and happy, even though children quickly understood the rules of social distancing meant that they would only be with this small group of children throughout the day. The pleasure of being with their friends more than made up for the social distancing!

Of course we will continue to stress how important it is to keep everyone safe through social distancing, hand washing, 'catch it, kill it, bin it', careful play at break and lunchtime, not touching anything that belongs to anyone else and so on. We've even managed socially distanced P.E. lessons where pupils have their own piece of sporting equipment e.g. a tennis racket or hockey stick for the week before it will be cleaned and passed on to another pod to use next week.

Colder weather today hasn't been too welcome, but it has not deterred the children from running around outside. Hopefully the warmth and sunshine of last month will rapidly return. On a day to day basis this just means that children need a top to keep them warm, and a hat and sunscreen for when we get the warmer weather!

Just to remind you all about another aspect of keeping safe that we have put in place. When you arrive at the school gates, you are asked to briefly confirm that your child is well, but we don't have a long time to chat with you about your child's wellbeing. That means we take it on trust that by bringing them to school you consider them to be healthy and not displaying any of the Covid-19 symptoms of a temperature, a cough or loss of taste. If your child goes on to display any of these symptoms in school, they will be taken from class immediately and you will be called by telephone and must come and collect your school and arrange for them to be tested for COVID-19. We will not re-admit them to school until either a negative result has been received by yourself where you must then provide that evidence to the school, but if the test is positive, you must follow the government guidance and your child cannot return to school for 7 days, but the whole of your household must self-isolate for 14 days.

If a child (or staff member) tests positive for coronavirus, the whole pod of children and their adults will be sent home and everyone must self-isolate for 14 days. As part of the national track and trace programme that would follow a positive test, if other cases were to be detected within that pod, Public Health England's local Health Protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and advise the school of the next steps to take.

Don't forget, that if you have the slightest doubt about whether your child has any symptoms, we would much rather you kept them at home and they come in the next day safe and well!

If any child complains of feeling unwell at any time during the day, regardless of whether it is with Covid-19 symptoms or not, to safeguard our staff members dealing with this, we will always send the staff first aider to collect the child while wearing full PPE rather than take any risks with their health. A cleaner will then thoroughly clean the child's table and chair and if they have used the toilets these will also be disinfected. As you can see, we have lots of procedures in place to keep the staff and children safe, but we really do depend on you to make all the right decisions too.

Please check carefully for the arrangements for Friday lunchtime closure of the school pods. All our gates will be manned from 12.30 until 1.00 p.m. and you should go to your child's pod as usual to collect them. The one way system into and out of the school site remains in operation at all times. Children should still come to school with their homemade packed lunch as all children will be eating before they are collected to go home and we would hate for anyone to go home hungry. School packed lunches will be provided as normal. Children in the childcare pods (Dolphin and Orca) will eat their lunch in the dining room as usual.

A final thought about the school pods opening for learning - my grateful thanks to everyone for following the rules of moving round the whole school site as well as the happy and responsive way you have been with all our school adults. Your support and kind words have been greatly appreciated by all.

For many of you, however, you have chosen to keep your children at home with you and are carrying on with the home learning. This has been a tremendous act on your part too. The responsibility for making sure that your child keeps up with school work while also having a balanced life is enormous and I know how challenging this has been, especially for all of you who are also working from home. Just remember that although the learning is really important, you are the best judge of what children need to do while they are in your care at home. If you feel that your child is under too much pressure to complete a lot of online learning, just let us know in school and we can provide you with some different ideas of how to keep them engaged in readiness for an eventual return to school.

At this time, I have no idea when there will be a wider reopening of schools to more year groups, or even to admitting more children into classes as the government has recently become much quieter about this. It is difficult to plan for what school will look like in September when we do not know what will happen to 'R' as a result of loosening the lockdown.

For those of you concerned about whether I can admit more children into the existing nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 pods, I promised that I would review this for the 15th June. Being able to take more children means creating new pods as we will not put additional children into an existing pod and, as you may imagine, finding staff and spaces for more pods will become increasingly difficult.

I do know that more of you are being asked to return to work as key workers, so if I have any opportunity to create another single pod, this would be prioritised over creating more pods in separate year groups. Thank you for those parents who have enquired about this - the office is happy to make a note of your query and after the 15th June a decision will be made about our capacity.

Finally, my thanks to everyone, whether you have returned your child to school, or if you have continued to help your child with their home learning. The staff and I greatly appreciate everything you are doing as parents for your children in keeping them safe, well and happy.

With my best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Foreman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'F'.

Mary Foreman
Interim Headteacher