

Harleston C.E. Primary Academy

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Interim Headteacher: Mrs M Foreman

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Dear Parents,

Welcome back! Firstly, a warm welcome to the Summer term. It seems strange to be in school with just a few children and staff rather than the 500+ adults and children that would usually be with us. We continue to enjoy having children and staff from Archbishop Sancroft school with us as we share the child care provision between us. The secondary school children carry out their learning tasks under the supervision of one of their staff, while the Harleston children enjoy a day filled with many wide-ranging activities, including starting the day with a Joe Wicks workout which is something they all thoroughly enjoy. I do hope that your children have resumed their home learning with enthusiasm to find out what new things they will be doing this week. I know their teachers have been busy planning and preparing lots of exciting things for the children to do.

School Closure Update: The Easter holiday gave us some warmth and sunshine to hopefully take your minds away from the worries of Covid-19, however, towards the end of the break the media started to present the public with ideas about children returning to school by May which may have caused you worry, confusion and concern. At this moment in time, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education is still stating very clearly there is no date for schools to be fully back and open again. In his speech of the 19th April he said that he will work with schools to decide what is the best way of reopening them when the time is right. If the five tests he has set are met in the next few weeks then we may be asked to re-open our schools to children before the end of the summer term - but if the NHS is still struggling to cope, if the daily death rate is not coming down quickly enough, if the number of people infected with the virus is still high, if there are still issues with the demand for PPE and finally if there is still a risk that any return to normal schooling could cause infections to peak again - schools will not be reopened. We look forward to being fully informed about the Government's 'traffic light' plan for easing the lockdown and being at the forefront of the reopening of institutions and businesses. Of course as soon as this information is able to be shared publicly, you will be written to by myself and informed what systems and procedures will be in place for the safe opening of school.

Laptops for Disadvantaged Secondary School Children Another announcement from Mr Williamson yesterday was that the Department for Education would be ordering laptops to help disadvantaged children who are sitting key exams next year as well as providing laptops and tablets for children with social workers or are care leavers. We have already had parents contacting us asking when we will be sending home laptops for their children to use but at this time the offer is only being made to children who are at secondary school and is not available to children in primary schools. Of course, this may change once the demand for laptops and tablets has been met for eligible secondary school children, but at this time, no mention is being made of any such support for children in primary schools.

Data Charges However, there has been a promise that the government is working with telecommunications providers to exempt certain educational resources from data charges which will be a welcome boost for parents whose broadband bills and data charges may have increased as a result of all the on-line home learning that is going on. No further details about this have been announced.

Advice for Parents - Yesterday the government also issued updated guidance for parents to support them home-schooling their children:

(www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

In summary, it usefully suggests not worrying about maintaining a full routine like children have at school, but to set a predictable routine for the day that includes getting up and going to bed at the same time each day; having regular meal times; having regular breaks; making time to be active and stopping use of all digital devices at least one hour before bed.

Free School Meals - Our hampers for children who are entitled to Free School Meals were successfully and smoothly launched today - special thanks to Michelle Johnson in the kitchen for making sure all the hampers were ready for collection. We did receive some lovely comments from grateful parents. Over the Easter holiday we made use of the Edenred voucher scheme and we are aware that there have still been some issues for parents attempting to visit the redemption website to redeem their code. Edenred have worked hard to resolve their technical issues caused by the high number of parents trying to access their website. Unfortunately the school has no control over the systems used by Edenred and hope that any issues experienced by parents are quickly solved by the company. We have only issued vouchers to cover the Easter holiday period and these will not be issued again while we have a working school kitchen in term time.

The Oak National Academy has also been set up and funded by the DfE and went live today and will continue at least until schools reopen. Although your child's class teacher is setting work for them to do at home via Google Classroom, you may wish to use, or the teacher may ask you to use, this as an online classroom. I have had a look at the resources available - they are set out for every year group from Reception to Year 10 - and a week's worth of learning, quizzes and video lessons have been posted. Three hours of learning is prepared each day for primary aged pupils with Maths, English and some topic work included. If you feel that you want to access any of these resources in addition to what is being set by school, please feel free to do so. You can find out more at www.thenational.academy

BBC BiteSize has also had a revamp and is offering daily lessons which may help parents who are struggling with access to computers and tablets for their children. This star-studded service has offerings from David Attenborough, Oti Mabuse, Sergio Aguero and Danny Dyer - a fantastic line-up! From Monday to Friday you can watch Bitesize daily on BBC Red Button and again on BBC iPlayer. There will be three 20 minute lessons each day with age range choices of 5-7; 7-9 and 9-11. The resources look really good so do feel that you can dip in and out of anything that you see on the daily schedule. For those of you with children with SEND, BBC Bitesize also has a very useful area with SEND resources, activities and support - well worth looking into.

Assessment in school - the government has confirmed that testing of children in phonics, KS1 SATs, Multiplication tests and KS2 SATs will not take place this year. Data for EYFS will not be required to be reported to the government either. We are awaiting guidance as to how our teacher assessed levels for children will be reported.

Ramadan begins on Thursday - our thoughts are with our Muslim families and the different way they will experience this period of great importance as they fast and pray during this time.

Despite the bright promise of warmth and sun, no doubt the next few weeks will continue to present us all with ongoing challenges. I am sure that many of you within the Harleston community will know of someone who has been affected by Covid-19. Our world is also beset with other trials too and our thoughts and prayers are with everyone who has faced difficult times of loss and sadness. I know how strong and supportive this community is so my thanks go to all of you who have supported the families and staff at our school in this time of need.

“In the midst of darkness, light persists.” Mahatma Gandhi

With very best wishes,

Mary Foreman
Interim Headteacher