

Harleston C.E. Primary Academy

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Interim Headteacher: Mrs M Foreman

21st September 2020

Dear Parents,

My thanks to everyone who has made the last two weeks so successful for the children. Most of the things that needed refinement for our entry and departure from the school site are now sorted and the systems in place are now running pretty smoothly. Queuing at the gates sees much more social distancing and folks are being very patient when faced with any delays - well done! With rates of infection now increasing, please make sure you follow the rules for social distancing at all times.

Most parents and grandparents dropping off or collecting children from school have been able to catch up with their child's class teacher, but where this has not happened it is because of the teacher needing to supervise children in a classroom that is not next to their exit door. Hopefully, teachers will be swapping over with support staff wherever possible on a regular basis so that you get a chance to see them too.

For parents wanting to catch me and have a face to face chat at the start and end of each day, I am always on duty at the exit gate to the main road and Daphne's crossing. Thankfully, I do get to see large numbers of parents and children every day and enjoy my daily conversations with you all.

What has worked well in the last two weeks?

- The speed in which parents can navigate the school site to either drop off or collect children with very few delays - a big improvement!
- Friday afternoon arrangements with the extra PE sessions for children across the school, including sports coaches leading play at lunchtime on Fridays. If your child hasn't had a session yet, their turn will come.
- Lunchtime arrangements - we have very smooth systems for making sure children in Key Stage 1 get their hot dinner. The forthcoming week will see the next challenge of making sure that our new intake reception children also enjoy their hot meals experience. I am on duty every day for hot lunches in the upper school hall and have thoroughly enjoyed chatting with the children and making sure they have a great lunchtime experience.
- Learning in the classroom - this is happening at a rapid pace. Our routines for daily learning are going well and the vast majority of children have adapted well to the expectation that they have returned to school to be the best learners that they can be. A full curriculum offer is in place.
- Communication with parents - where parents have had concerns, they have contacted the school immediately and either the office team or I have replied as quickly as we can.
- Bags in school - we have seen fewer big bags in school - we are really happy to see small bags that have room for a change of footwear for P.E. but we also know that some children are really attached to their new rucksacks and are being very sensible in making sure they are placed carefully on their pegs.
- Pastoral care - where we have been made aware that children are having difficulties, Alison and Mr Mullen have swung into action. This has included talking to parents on the

telephone, inviting them into school for meetings and having 'triage' meetings with children, face to face, when they need immediate help.

- Parents volunteering to help in school - even in such a difficult situation that we all find ourselves in. (Please let the school office know if you want to volunteer we are slowly getting our previous volunteers back into school - training will be given to all volunteers.)
- Parents letting us know when their children are feeling unwell.
- The school lets parents know when children are feeling unwell.
- Fire drills - we have now had one in each week for the whole school and these have worked extremely well.

What could we all do a little better?

- Reminder that only one parent should be dropping off and collecting children at the beginning and end of the day.
- Making sure the class teacher has been meeting and greeting parents.
- Each year group updating parents with the learning that will take place this half term.
- Google classrooms up and running to support learning for spellings, homework and teaching and learning when children are absent from school.
- Parents coming directly to school when there are concerns rather than posting them on social media.
- Where children are struggling to adapt to the return to school after 6 months at home and not doing any of the home learning that was available, parents are fully supportive of the school and the need for children to engage in their learning as quickly as possible
- Making sure children do not block footpaths on the way to and from school because they are riding bikes or scooters and not giving way to others. We have parents who are very concerned that they have to walk into the road to avoid children on paths riding bikes and scooters so please make sure if your child is on these, they must make space for others.
- Making sure year 5 and 6 children who are walking home alone do not stay on the school site to play football or play on the activity equipment.
- Making sure parents know where to find the headteacher each day

General updates :

- Drones - please note that we have had a case of a drone being flown over the school this week. All such incidents mean where we can identify the drone, this information is passed to the police. If such incidents happen when children are outside, the class will be brought back into their classroom. If parents become aware of drones flying in the vicinity of the school, please contact us immediately.
- From 28th September, when children are absent from school, they will be able to access the learning that is taking place in class via Google Classroom. We will expect all children absent from school, unless seriously ill, to complete learning. Teachers from school will ensure that children's online learning is monitored and feedback given.
- All our home learning will be set via Google. This does mean that parents need to forward plan if they don't have appropriate devices at home. During lockdown we delivered lots of home learning packs to families. From the 28th September we will still

be able to provide paper based learning materials for those children not in school and do not have access to appropriate technology.

- As we move towards a potentially isolated Christmas without the whole family gathering together, you might like to ask extended family members to support you in providing technology to help your children learn rather than buying them the latest games technology - after all, I think we can all foresee many more times when children will be learning at home. We have new Chromebooks in school ready for children to use in their learning. Chromebooks are secure, simple and shareable devices that will help children to stay connected with their learning. Chrome books can be purchased for around £200 so it is well worth planning ahead for those Christmas presents.
- Additional support for families - if you are still struggling for school uniform and extra items such as coats, please contact the school office and our pastoral team may be able to help you out free of charge with clothing that we have in stock.
- Face coverings - the rate of COVID-19 infection is increasing rapidly. Up to now we have been very relaxed about parents being on the school site. But we now have the rule of '6' and of course we have the parents of over 450 children on our site at the start and end of every school day. So that you all feel safer, I would ask you to consider how you can make others feel safer by wearing a face covering when on the school site. We already have many parents who come onto site wearing a face covering, so I would encourage more of you to do so. I have no intention of making this compulsory yet, but fear that in the near future the government will be introducing this as one of it's new measures.
- It is your choice if you wish to send your child in with a mask or face shield for them to wear at school. Please ensure that they know how to use them correctly. It is not the school's responsibility to do this.
- I listened to the update from the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Officer this morning and some very clear points were made. Patrick Vallance said that the number of COVID-19 infections is doubling roughly every 7 days and if it continues at this rate there will be around 50,000 cases a day leading to over 200 deaths a day by mid-November. Dr Chris Whitty said that although the high rates of transmission being seen across the country are currently very localised, but are rising in every area across the whole country.

Very importantly, he said **'It is all of our problem'**.

The next point that was made was that we should view COVID-19 as being just as dangerous as it was when the first wave struck us, with mortality rates being similar to last time and will particularly affect older people and not children.

There are 4 ways the virus will have a significant effect on people's health:

1. Direct COVID deaths
2. NHS emergency services overwhelmed by the huge spike in infections
3. If the NHS spends a large effort treating COVID patients it will lead to a reduction in services for other non-COVID patients
4. It will impact on the economy, mental health, well-being so it is a difficult balance to prevent the one thing overwhelming the other

What can we do?

- Reduce individual risk - Hands, Face, Space
- Isolate the virus - Symptoms = self-isolate- test, find contacts= self-isolate
- Break unnecessary links between households
- Science - use drugs and vaccine

I think this makes it very clear that everyone in school has their part to play in reducing the individual risk for each one of us and this includes making sure that we remember Hands, Face, Space throughout our time on the school site. If you have been in close contact with anyone who has tested positive for the virus we need you to follow the isolation rules for yourself and your family so that you do not risk bringing the infection into school and causing community infection. Please follow the rules about households mixing and not meeting in groups of larger than 6 people.

With your help and support we can battle through this together.

On a lighter note, my grateful thanks to the many parents who have given me excellent feedback - both positive and negative since term began. You have also made an effort to chat to me at the gate when you have had concerns. I look forward to meeting and greeting you from behind my face covering in the forthcoming weeks.

I hope that we can continue to work together, keeping the school open, keeping children learning and keeping you all safe and well.

With my regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Foreman".

Mary Foreman

Interim Headteacher