

23rd February 2021

Dear Parents,

We hope you are all keeping well and have had the opportunity to rest and relax over the half term.

Further to the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday, you will be aware that all primary school children will return to school on Monday 8 March. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to school soon. It will be lovely to see everyone again.

The health, safety and wellbeing of all our children, staff and wider community is of paramount importance. Many of the arrangements that were in place in the autumn term, such as, staggered timings, will continue as the children return to school so we can reduce risks and safeguard the staff and children, as much as we can. It must be recognised that the school cannot eliminate all risk. We appreciate your support in helping us to sustain the health, safety and wellbeing of our whole school community. [Please see Return to School – March 2021 document for further details.]

The school's exciting new Learning Adventure begins this week, which will include a focus upon the wonders of the world of stories. During the Learning Adventure, children will engage with stories in a range of ways, including oral storytelling, reading for enjoyment, creative writing [including associated skills], exploring illustration and consideration of themes within stories linked to PSHE. We will share further details with you in due course, once the children have had time to explore the Learning Adventure focus in greater detail. We are most grateful for all you are doing to support your child's learning at home and the support you have shown the school.

National School Closures and Provision for Critical Worker and Vulnerable Children [until March 8th]

The government guidance continues to indicate that we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of Coronavirus [Covid-19]. Up until March 8th, the school will remain closed to most pupils and will continue to provide care for those children who are most vulnerable and for children whose parents are **critical** to the Covid-19 response. During this period, government guidance states that parents who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can. It is important that children attend school only for you to complete your work as a critical worker and there is no other alternative, so that everyone including children, parents and staff are at less risk of exposure to the virus. We appreciate the challenges this brings, but to keep everyone as safe as we can, we need to reduce the overall number of social contacts/interactions in our community. We are grateful that many parents who are working have been able to ensure their child/ren are kept at home. Your support is much appreciated.

Remote Learning

This week remote learning has recommenced, after the half term break, for all those children not attending school. We would like to thank parents for the ongoing support they are providing for children during periods of home learning. We recognise that families will be facing many pressures during these times, and we would like to reassure all families that whatever you can do to support your child's learning will be of great value, even if not all sessions provided can be completed. We do not anticipate that you can fully replicate the typical school day or all the activities/ events that the children would usually engage in during an ordinary school week. Please do not worry if you are not able to do everything.

Children are also able to participate in regular live video sessions with their teachers and a small group of their peers – these have recommenced this week. You may also wish to use the class email contact if you have a question about how to support your child's home learning. Teachers will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible, but please be patient when awaiting a response, as the teachers will be continuing to teach in school, alongside preparing resources for home learning. Please also be aware that arrangements may be subject to change due to issues, such as, staff absence and other unforeseen circumstances.

You may wish to consider these top tips to support with remote learning:

- ✓ Focus on routine - children thrive on routine particularly in times of uncertainty. You are welcome to speak to your child's teacher about the best routine, to help them engage with their learning.
- ✓ Have a dedicated workplace, if possible - having a set area for children to work and their resources available can be helpful.
- ✓ Stay in touch with your school - contact the school if you have any questions or need extra support.
- ✓ Find time for work and play - other activities, such as, games, reading and exercise are just as important as schoolwork for your child's development. Find a balance between learning and other activities, such as, family time or connecting with friends remotely.
- ✓ Be active - exercising can help maintain everyone's health and mental wellbeing. Physical activity releases endorphins that improves mood, energy and focus, whilst reducing anxiety.
- ✓ Get involved if you can - try to work together on something. Other online resources are available to help, such as, the Oak National Academy and BBC Bitesize.
- ✓ Praise your children - children need regular praise to help keep them engaged and motivated. Praise them for their schoolwork but also for their behaviour at home.
- ✓ Be mindful of mental health - as a parent we often feel that all the support for our children lies with us but we have to remember we can't always have all the answers. Please do not hesitate to contact us or visit the Every Mind Matters website for support on mental health and wellbeing. In addition, the East Dorset Children's Centres Team, have provided the following link to their 'Action for Children 'TALK' services for Parents' <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/> and Dorset Council's Educational Psychology Service has a helpline to support those who are worried about their child during the lockdown. The helpline number is: **01258 474036**. It is open from Monday to Friday from 9am to 4.45pm. Callers need to ring and make an appointment for a 30 minute phone consultation. Calls are confidential unless there is a risk of harm to the caller, their child or someone else. Brief records are kept of each call.
- ✓ Don't be too hard on yourself - this is a challenging time for us all. Home learning is difficult but remember, you are not expected to be the teacher. We are all doing our best to support children's learning in this tough time.
Please see the link for further information. <https://youtu.be/KZaC3Jsgb4Q>

Keeping your Child/ren Safe Online

Whilst there are significant benefits to being online including staying connected to family and friends during this period, it is also important to be aware of some of the risks associated with children being online. Having regular conversations with your child about staying safe when using the internet and encouraging them to speak to you if they come across something worrying online are simple actions you can take to help keep your child safe. The government has also developed guidance that outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to receive support and advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

Return to School for All Children - Minimising Risk to the School Community

With the continued infection rates, including the more highly transmittable variants of Coronavirus, and as restrictions begin to be relaxed, we will all have to be even more vigilant to avoid the spread of the virus and ensure the health and safety of our whole school community. Everyone's support in minimising the possibility of anyone becoming unwell and the need to self-isolate, is important. As a school community working together, we can also reduce the risks by:

- **limiting contact with people outside of our households – from Monday 8th March different households should continue to not mix unless they are in a support/childcare bubble or meeting one person from another household for exercise and recreation outdoors**
- **making sure that children and staff do not attend school if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus – it will be necessary to send a child/adult home if they become unwell**
- **self-isolating if you or anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid-19 immediately and booking a test for anyone with symptoms - if you are waiting for a test result you and your whole household must self-isolate until you get the result**
- **if you or someone in your household receives a positive test result or have been identified as a close contact, you must self-isolate for the required time period**

- expecting everyone to continue to follow the guidance in and out of school regarding contact and social/physical distancing, including wearing facemasks where required and particularly when the appropriate social distancing is difficult to maintain
- promoting regular hand washing for at least 20 seconds with water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the catch it, bin it, kill it approach

When dropping off or collecting your child/ren from school, please adhere to the following safety measures:

- **Continued use of the one-way system on the playground.**
- **Maintaining strict and appropriate social distancing at all times.**
- **Utilising a face mask/cover during drop off and collection times [unless you have a pre-existing health condition].**
- **Ensuring only one person accompanies your child to school [avoiding extra people accompanying your child to school where this is not necessary].**
- **Continued use of the red lines outside each year group to queue for drop off/collection, ensuring that parents do not come any further forward than the red line nearest to your child's year group entrance - this is to ensure appropriate social distancing for both parents and staff.**
- **Ensuring your time on the school grounds is as short as possible, including avoiding congregating with other parents/families. This includes ensuring that the area around the school gates are kept clear and that pathways around the school [including the pathways outside the main gates and around the car park] are used for socially distanced entry and exit purposes only.**
- **If you have any messages for your child's teacher, please contact them via the school office email, rather than relaying messages on the door in the morning.**

We appreciate your support in helping us to sustain the safety and wellbeing of our whole school community

School Office and Messages for Staff

A reminder that **the school office is only partially open to parents and visitors and we ask that you refrain from visiting the school office wherever this can be avoided. In the first instance, we request that all communications are made via email or phone to the school office**, including any messages for your child's teacher. A telephone appointment to speak with a member of staff will be made for you if necessary. If you need to visit the school office for essential reasons [or if agreed with a member of the school office], the entrance area has been marked with physical/social distancing demarcations and there is a taped line by the office window to ensure the appropriate social/physical distance is in place. In the office foyer, there are two boxes/containers, one for paperwork, such as, letters/permission slips, and one for objects/parcels. Entrance to other areas of the school will not be permitted, unless by prior agreement/appointment. We would be grateful if you could wear a face mask/covering when visiting the school office, unless you have a medical exemption.

Coronavirus [Covid-19] Guidance [Please see separate information letter for more details.]

Please remember that if your child or any member of the household have symptoms of coronavirus infection [COVID-19], **however mild**, you will all need to stay at home for 10 days from when the symptoms started. The most common symptoms of coronavirus [COVID-19] are:

- **High temperature [feels hot to touch on the back or chest – a temperature of 37.6 degrees and above]**
- **New continuous cough [this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)]**
- **Loss or change to your normal sense of smell or taste [anosmia]**

More details of the symptoms can be found: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

It is important that anyone with symptoms is tested. If your child presents with Covid-19 symptoms, they will not be able to come to school and you should book a test. A test can be booked or ordered online via NHS UK, using the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-for-coronavirus/> **It is essential that the school is advised of the test outcome.** Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to school, if they are well enough, and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. If there is a confirmed case in school, it may be necessary for other children/groups of children and staff to isolate at home. We will work closely with Public Health England who will advise us of the course of action.

If your child appears to present with any of these symptoms when they are in school, we will contact you and you will be advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance](#).

You can seek further medical advice from NHS 111 and you can also use the Department for Education coronavirus helpline, which is available to answer questions about COVID-19 on T: 0800 046 8687. The helpline is open between 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday) and 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday).

The school will endeavour to remain open, however, if there are confirmed case/s or insufficient safe staffing levels, the school may have to close or partially close for a period of time. The school will keep parents updated with any decisions by parentmail as soon as they can. If in the event that children have to self-isolate at home or that our school has to be partially/closed, teaching staff will provide home learning for each child/year group via Microsoft Teams.

Support and Information

Please see the following link for additional information and guidelines about Coronavirus and a confidential helpline number for those who may need advice if you are worried about work and/or money. If you need help with access to food, warm clothes or need someone to talk to then support is available.

<https://mailchi.mp/dorsetcouncil/latest-coronavirus-covid-19-news-and-information-17-march-3121566>

[Find out about support available](#)

As part of the COVID Winter Grant, Dorset Council have funded Citizen's Advice to help families with the cost of utility bills. They can make rapid £200 payments to support families, as well as connecting to additional areas of help. You can apply online [Get help with your utility bills - Dorset Council](#) or by ringing 01929 408950.

In addition, maybe you could benefit from a **one-off chat** with someone who has professional training. Contact Psychotherapy Dorset and someone will call back offering to listen and speak for 50 minutes. The service is designed to help people share some of the impact that the current situation is having on them and to regain some sense of control. This is not an advice service nor counselling or therapy. **Call 07714 330120 or go to the website: www.psychotherapydorset.co.uk**

Finally

Thank you for your continued support, understanding and patience as we deal with this ever changing, difficult and complex situation. By working together, we hope that we can ensure the health and safety of our whole school community. We will continue to keep you updated as the situation develops and more information is available.

We all look forward to welcoming the children back to school soon.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs C Mahon
Headteacher