

29th September 2021

Dear Parents,

It is lovely to see how the children are settling into their new classes and we are delighted with the way the early Years Foundation Stage children have started their first year at school. Thank you to parents and children for keeping to the school's system for school drop off and collection times, including the use of the one-way system on the playground.

The children are enjoying our new exciting Learning Adventure 'The Island'. So far, the children have planned their expedition to the newly discovered island, and they have completed the journey - they are now engaging in the initial explorations of the island, as well as thinking about more practical aspects such as setting up their camp. During the Learning Adventure, the children will explore a range of curriculum areas, including rich opportunities for writing (for example, writing diary entries about their experiences, writing descriptions of the island or writing reports about their findings), developing their scientific knowledge and understanding (by investigating the natural features of the island), engaging in map making as part of the Geography curriculum, and expressing their ideas and feelings about the island through the expressive arts. The children will continue their explorations over the coming weeks, and are sure to experience many exciting adventures along the way.

Minimising Risk to the School Community

The increasing number of cases, nationally and locally, including in our community, are a reminder that we are still living with COVID-19 and we all need to continue to consider the risks. The health, safety and wellbeing of all our children, staff and wider community is of paramount importance. It is important that we remain considerate of vulnerable members of our community, as well as limiting the possibility of people becoming unwell. **On this basis, the school is continuing to ask everyone to continue to be vigilant and take care, including maintaining the systems and protocols we have put in place on our school grounds, such as, the one way system at drop off/collection times including using the playground markings, utilising the school timings and considering the wearing of masks when it is busy** (unless you have a pre-existing health condition).

In order to ensure that the staggered timings work effectively and limit the number of people arriving and leaving the school at one time, please make every effort to keep to your allocated time slot and to leave the school grounds promptly after drop off/collection. Please also continue to use 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 enable social distancing for both parents and staff.

We also ask parents to avoid congregating in groups on the school site, and to ensure that only one person accompanies your child to school. By taking these measures we can look to reduce opportunities for the virus to transmit, with the aim of ensuring the wellbeing of all and enabling children to remain in school. Your continued support, understanding and cooperation is appreciated.

Extra-Curriculum Opportunities/Clubs

This week, children in Years 2, 3 and 4 have received a letter inviting them to attend an after school club, which will be run by a member of school staff. Each year group will be provided with a choice of two clubs to select from. Over the course of the academic year, the clubs will aim to provide a range of engaging experiences to supplement children's learning and foster their social skills. Children in Year 1 will be invited to attend an after school club after the autumn half-term break, and details will be provided to Year 1 families nearer the time.

Home Learning for Children in Years 1 – 4

A reminder that home learning will be set via Microsoft Teams every Friday, and the tasks will be focused upon either English, Maths or Learning Adventure. Your child has brought home a Home Learning Log, in which they can complete their tasks [some tasks may not require recording in the Home Learning Log, for example, pieces of art work or models that the children make]. In order to continue to reduce transfer of resources between home and school, we continue to ask that your child's weekly home learning is uploaded via Microsoft Teams, as opposed to handing in their Home Learning Log or bringing in their art works / models. It is intended that your child's Home Learning Log remains at home. We ask that your child's home learning is uploaded to Microsoft Teams by the following Wednesday, and teachers will provide feedback to your child via this format. Please contact the school office if you have any difficulties accessing your child's Microsoft Teams account.

PE and Outdoor Learning

As the autumn term proceeds and the weather begins to change, we would be grateful if you could ensure that your child has suitable clothing for PE and outdoor learning, such as, wellington boots, leggings/jogging bottoms and waterproof outer layer.

Reception/Early Years Foundation Stage Intake for 2022

Any parents wishing their child to come to Rushcombe First School in September 2022, for children born between 1st September 2017 and 31st August 2018, need to apply for a school place. Applications should be completed on-line at www.dorsetforyou.com/schooladmissions. The closing date for all applications is 15th January 2022. Please pass this message on to any families you may know. If you need any advice or further information, please contact the school office.

Year 4 Transfer to Middle Schools

Parents of Year 4 children will have received information from the local authority about their child's transfer to middle school [please refer to the parentmail sent out on 16th September 2021]. Applications should be completed on-line via the local authority website at www.dorsetforyou.com/schooladmissions. The closing date for all applications is 15th January 2022.

Universal Infant Free School Meals [Early Years Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2]

As you are aware, all children in Foundation and Key Stage 1 [Year 1 and Year 2] are entitled to a free school meal. Parents who wish to order a free packed lunch for their child, should use Chartwells online ordering system [<https://dorset.mealselector.co.uk>]. Please note the on-line ordering system requires parents to order their child's meals up until the cut off time of midnight on Sunday – 7 days before the full week in which the meals are to be served. It is recommended that parents complete their child's order for the whole term. Please find the link to the website: <https://dorset.mealselector.co.uk> If you have any questions or require support, please contact Chartwells at BPAdmin@compass-group.co.uk or on 01202 691038.

Free School Meals

For those families that are entitled to a free school meal due to income, it is important that your child is registered for the free school meal. If you would like to find out if you are eligible, please visit the online eligibility checker at <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/free-school-meals>. This online form only takes a few moments to complete and will give you an immediate response. We would encourage you to do this, as the school also receives much needed additional funding for each child that is registered. Once an award is made, please inform the school office. Meals are ordered on-line via the Chartwells website, as above. If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Dogs

Please can we remind you that to ensure the health and safety of all our children, **dogs are not allowed on the school grounds**. We would appreciate it if dogs are not left tied up very close to the school gates. Thank you for your co-operation in keeping our school environment a safe place to be during these busy times of the day.

Road Safety and Car Parking

Please can we also remind those parents who drive their children to and from school, to consider the safety of other children and parents, and not to park on the school keep clear markings or the double yellow lines for any amount of time, as it is prohibited. Please use the parking bays. The school would also encourage you to consider our neighbours convenience and safety when you park. Your support with this matter is appreciated.

Coronavirus [Covid-19] Guidance

Please remember that if your child/ren have symptoms of coronavirus infection [COVID-19], **however mild**, they will need to stay at home for 10 days from when the symptoms started. **Your child/ren must not come in to school if they are displaying any symptoms of Covid 19.** 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 PCR 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/> or by calling 119. Your household should isolate until you receive the test results giving the all clear.

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.

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 insufficient safe staffing levels, the school may have to close or partially close for a period of time. The school will continue to work closely with Dorset Council and Public Health Dorset to inform its decision making. 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 remote learning for each child/year group via Microsoft Teams.

Department of Education: Primary School Children and Rapid Asymptomatic Testing

On advice from Public Health England [PHE], children in primary schools have not been included in the rapid asymptomatic testing programme. Recently, the Department of Education have updated their information to indicate that parents may wish to consider whether to test asymptomatic children under the age of 11. The DfE information states that 'Advice from Public Health England is that there is currently limited public health benefit from testing primary school age children with lateral flow devices (LFDs). Primary school age children may find the LFD testing process invasive and unpleasant and are unable to self-swab.'

If a child or a member of your household develops potential symptoms of Coronavirus you should continue to follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and [book a PCR test](#) for the child. **Rapid LFD tests should not be offered to individuals who develop coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, regardless of their age.**

Confirmatory Polymerase Chain Reaction [PCR] Testing for Positive Lateral Flow Device [LFD] Tests

Please note that a confirmatory PCR test is required for anyone receiving a positive LFD test. The PCR test should be booked immediately either [online](#) or by calling 119 and should be undertaken within 2 days. Anyone who had a positive LFD test result should self-isolate immediately in line with [NHS Test and Trace guidance](#) and while awaiting the PCR test result. If the PCR test is negative, it overrides the LFD test and the person can then end their self-isolation.

Contact Tracing

As you may be aware, schools will no longer be responsible for contact tracing. NHS Test and Trace has taken on this responsibility and will work with parents and carers to identify close contacts of a positive case. NHS Test and Trace use the same criteria as schools have previously to identify close contacts and determine any self-isolation periods for adults and children. It remains important to report any positive test results to school to record absence accordingly.

Self-isolation

From Monday 16th August, children under the age of 18 years old and fully vaccinated adults will no longer need to self-isolate as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. **Instead of self-isolating, these close contacts will be identified using the same criteria as schools have used previously and will be advised to take a PCR test.** Adults who are not fully vaccinated and are close contacts of a positive case must self-isolate.

Finally

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation in helping us to sustain the health, safety and wellbeing of our whole school community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Mahon". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Mrs C Mahon
Headteacher