Thursday 28th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. We are about to enter week 4 of Remote Learning and we now know after the Prime Ministers announcement last night that we won’t be open until at least March 8th. I know how difficult it is for your children to be learning whilst at home and I know that some of you have the added pressures of working from home too.

As a mother, I know that home schooling can be incredibly challenging however, the situation now is far more worrying than it was in the first wave of the COVID -19 pandemic – Northamptonshire still being in one of the worst positions in the East Midlands with cases still rising. So, this kind of news, I am sure will send some parents into panic and despair. I myself have felt the pressure over the last week or two as I have juggled work as well as quadratic equations and mock exams! Please remember that we are here to support you and understand the difficulties you may be having.

We all collectively have a responsibility to keep our children at home. The Department of Education now advises that where Key Workers can work from home, they should do so, and keep children off on those days. I realise that this will not be popular advice, but I encourage you to try and follow it and only use the school when there is no other option. Children should only be coming into school if it is not safe to keep them at home.

The more we reduce our children’s time mixing in school, the fewer transmission chains we make for the virus. We need to be in a good position by the 8th March so that cases are low in the area. The restriction of schooling is unprecedented in our lifetimes and reflects the severity of the measures required to temper the threat. The request therefore, is to look very carefully at your personal circumstances. In whatever your occupation the core question should be ‘How can I keep my children at home?’

Although the government state there are ‘no limits’ to numbers in school, it should be made clear that this is guidance and that every school has its own limitations. Please remember that it is support staff that are supervising the children in school and not teachers and that although our dedicated support staff have agreed on principle to supervise the children onsite this should not be taken advantage of as there are some limitations to their work and expectations. As mentioned in previous newsletters, the system we have is working but is fragile with all staff working at full capacity. We have no surplus staff on hand to fill in if somebody was to fall ill.

Staff on site have now begun taking Lateral Flow Tests twice a week so that we can pick up any asymptomatic cases quickly. Therefore, for those of you with children in school, you will need to be prepared if a case arises as class bubbles will have to be closed swiftly if a staff member tests positive and have been in contact with a class of children.

With regards to Remote Learning, I want to say thank you. Thank you for supporting your children at home and getting them onto Zoom sessions, collecting resources, supporting them to complete work, uploading work and getting it back to teachers. We really appreciate all your efforts and recognise the huge team effort to keep education going for our children.

 We are now required by the Local Authority to record attendance of children engaging with Remote Learning. Please do not worry if you had some initial problems attending as this will be noted accordingly on your child’s attendance register. The Government expectations are that parents and pupils engage as much as possible with the school to access learning so please let your child’s class teacher know if your child will be unable to attend a live lesson of learning just as you would in school.

Please try and get some completed work back to your child’s class teacher. This will help them track progress so that when we do get back to school, we can build on what they have learned and retained.

BUT if you are really struggling to keep your child’s education going as well as working and generally finding things difficult – STOP! Nobody is going to think less of you if you need a break to take a breather. I know how my children are becoming fatigued with being online most of the day and when I feel things are becoming too strained, I do not hesitate to get them to down tools and come away from their work. Please just let your child’s teacher know and we can make adjustments to help you.

As staff, we meet remotely on a weekly basis and are constantly reviewing the Remote Learning package that we are offering. The staff have voiced how supported they feel by you the parents and I thank you for your words of encouragement and appreciation for the teachers as they have learnt very quickly how to do things differently as well as juggle their own personal situations.

So as we approach the weekend, let us celebrate another successful week. The Prime Minister’s news this week was not what we all wanted to hear but if we work together, I have no doubt that we will be in a good position to reopen on the provisional date provided by the government.

Best wishes,

Mrs Sarbutts