



NEWSFLASH!

Friday 8th January

Dear Parent/Carers

What a week! We thought that instead of our usual fortnightly newsletter we would publish a weekly 'newsflash' to keep you more regularly updated during these challenging times.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank you for your patience this week whilst we have been making the transition over to remote learning.

None of us expected to be in this position when we broke up for the Christmas holidays, so an awful lot has had to be changed or adapted from a teaching and learning perspective as well as from a school operational side too.

Too end on a positive note we received two lovely phone calls from retired Henfield residents who wanted to help the school during this crisis. One of them wanted to buy a laptop for a child to use and the other has kindly donated some money for the school to buy more laptops. Their generosity brought a tear to my eye – such a kind and fitting gesture.

Keep safe,

Mrs Maurice

Online Learning

I hope that you have noticed a significant difference with our online learning provision – we really have worked hard to improve our offer, taking into account everyone's views. Staff are constantly learning how to do new things, so watch this space!

Although it might not appear so it takes a lot longer to create and upload online learning material so our teachers' workload has increased, but we're hoping that as we get more proficient with working this way that will change!

Our teachers have also felt encouraged by the positive feedback they have received this week – it has really boosted staff morale during a week when teachers have borne the brunt of a lot of negative press.

We welcome constructive feedback – so please let us know what's working well and what could make online learning even better for your child/ren and you.

Critical Worker Status

We have received a fair bit of criticism for going against the government guidelines by requiring that both parents are critical workers (exceptions being frontline NHS and police) to secure a place at school, so I just wanted to clarify why I have had to make the difficult decisions that I have.

We are in the midst of a public health crisis and our hospitals are struggling to cope with the demand. The transmission rate of the new variant places us at much greater risk than back in March. Therefore, the safety measures that we need to put in place to mitigate this risk are the same as what we needed to have in place in March. This means that the children need to be socially distanced which reduces the capacity of each class.

Teachers can provide online learning or supervise key worker bubbles. It is totally unmanageable for them to do both. Therefore, the children who are in school are being supervised by the TAs. Also not all staff can currently work in school. This again limits the number of children that we can accommodate in school.

To put this into context, when we went into lockdown in March, we had less than 20 children in school – now we have 95! Since March the list of critical workers has widened and become vaguer. Headteacher's nationwide feel let down by the government's guidance and their lack of understanding about the pressure that it is putting schools under and they are having to make the same decisions that I have. We literally have only a couple of critical worker spaces left with the staff and space available.

We would all find it easier if all our pupils were in school. We totally understand that it is a struggle for you but we will endeavour to give you as much support remotely. The fight against this virus is a community effort – and for many of you, your contribution to the fight will be juggling working and supporting your child/rens learning at home.