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## School Closure Weekly Update

Friday 29th January 2021

Dear Parents,

### Extended Period of School Closure

One day, I promise, I will be writing with good news and very much look forward to the time when we can see all our children back in school. As things stand at the moment, that time is still a little way away and we have a further extension to the school closure period to work through. Thank you for your patience whilst we decide on the steps that we need to take in light of this week's announcement that schools won't open until 8<sup>th</sup> March at the earliest.

### Places at school for the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils

We will continue to support our key worker families by offering their children a place at school in order to enable critical worker parents to attend to their work. We have always done our utmost to support these families in the best way we can. We have followed the Government's expectation by offering places where just one parent is a key worker and when a key worker parent is completing vital work at home and no one else is able to look after the children. Our staff come into school every day to enable critical workers to do their jobs which are vital to keeping the country running during the pandemic. So please, if you are a critical worker, continue to help us to do the best we can for everyone.

At the moment average attendance at Ashford primary schools is about 24%. Our number is higher than that at 30%, with approximately 22 children in each year group bubble. I want to

### Message for the Children...

Hi everyone,

I hope that you have all had a great week.

It felt very cold at school at the start of the week but today I'm starting to feel as though spring might be on its way. The daffodils are starting to grow by the front entrance and there are some signs of life in the hanging baskets by the main door.

I've also got a little jug on my kitchen windowsill at home which Mrs McGibney bought me for Christmas. It came with some bulbs that I planted in the Christmas holiday and this morning I noticed a tiny green shoot popping up. Spring is definitely on its way.

When you go out for a walk over the next few weeks see what signs of spring you might be able to spot. It's still early but it's nice to think that brighter days are just around the corner.

Have a good week everyone.

Smiles to you all

Miss Talbot



try and keep as close as possible to this figure over the coming weeks in order to ensure that we can continue to keep our school community safe. There is no national cap on bubble sizes but there is an expectation that my risk assessments ensure that groupings enable children to be spread out as far as possible in the Classroom and that close contact is minimised. Groupings should be less than a full class of 30 children. Some of our bubbles have now reached the capacity set out in our risk assessment.

Higher numbers of children within a year group would mean that the children couldn't safely remain in one classroom. This would increase the risk of infection to other pupils and staff at a time when we need to be doing all we can to keep infection rates low. Higher numbers in a year group would mean that I might have to split a bubble into two groups and bring in another member of staff to lead a second smaller group. This won't be another teacher. I need to do everything I can to ensure that a member of each year group's teaching team is still able to lead the remote learning provision for our children at home – I won't compromise on this. These children at home have missed out on a significant amount of face to face teaching and we need to ensure that we maintain as much capacity as possible to deliver strong provision for them. In the event that we need to split a bubble, it is likely that a small group of children will then work with a teaching assistant on a daily basis, engaging with the remote learning tasks as they would if they were at home. Daily learning tasks set for those working at home mirror the work completed in class, ensuring fair curriculum provision for all.

Key worker places should only be taken if you have no other options to enable you to fulfil your work. The Government's expectation is very clear that you should only send your child to school if absolutely necessary – if a parent is at home and doesn't work, then your child must stay at home. If you are a key worker working from home, you should still endeavour to keep your child at home if you can. If another parent at home is working but isn't a key worker, you should keep your child at home. I understand that keeping your children at home and supporting home learning whilst you are working is an almost impossible task and am very grateful for the adjustments that many families have had to make in order to keep their children safe at home. I also understand that the extended period of school closure may now change some families' circumstances. We need to work collectively to ensure a solution can be put in place that supports as many families as possible.

1. We are going to continue to ask that key worker children attend school full time. This will give them the best consistency. I won't be operating any rota systems or part time attendance as this would only increase the number of children within a bubble over the course of a week. If your child is already attending school, please revisit whether you can keep your child at home. They should only be attending school if you have no other options. If you no longer need your place, please let Mrs Partridge know by emailing [schoolclosure@godinton.kent.sch.uk](mailto:schoolclosure@godinton.kent.sch.uk) by the end of day on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February.

2. If the extended period of school closure now means that you cannot keep your child at home as you are now required to go into work and subsequently require a full time key worker place, please let us know by emailing Mrs Partridge at the above email address by Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February. Only request a place if absolutely necessary. We will then review the number of children we have requiring a key worker place so that we can put suitable arrangements in place. Please do not ask for a place simply because things are difficult or because your child is missing their friends or you are worried about their engagement with their learning, as all the children are in the same position, there needs to be a legitimate work based reason as to why you require a place.
3. Any additional places will now be offered from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February at the earliest. We need time to review our risk assessments and staff deployment, and require up to date numbers in order to do this.
4. Vulnerable children should continue to attend school as they have been. Any vulnerable pupils who have been contacted by the school regarding attendance should contact us if circumstances have changed and you now need a place.
5. All temporary Breakfast Club places offered this term will finish on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February. We will review whether we are able to continue to offer you a place during the last week of this term and will let you know.

Thank you to everyone who has been able to put arrangements in place to keep their children at home over the past four weeks. So many of our families are working amazingly hard to support their children's learning at home, whilst juggling so many other things and I am very grateful for this. I have seen super engagement from many children and am so proud of the resilience they have shown. I know that they are missing friends, routines and the normality of school, extra-curricular activities and seeing extended family. These are tough times but we will get through it.

For those of you who are not key workers and have no choice but to keep your children at home, I'm sorry that we won't be seeing them back at school just yet. I can't even tell you when this may happen. We will continue to do all we can to ensure that we are providing exciting and purposeful tasks for your children to complete at home and to provide opportunities to engage with their teacher and other children through the interactive sessions. If anyone needs any further support, please let us know and we will do what we can to help.

## **February Half Term**

School will be closed to all pupils, including the children of key workers and vulnerable children during February Half Term week which runs from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February to Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February. Please note that Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February is no longer an INSET day and that term 4 starts on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

## **Lateral Flow Testing for School Staff**

This week we received our supply of lateral flow tests so that all school staff have the opportunity to opt into the lateral flow testing programme being implemented in primary schools across the country. The tests are carried out by asymptomatic staff twice a week at home and give a result in 30 minutes. The programme is designed to identify any staff who may be infected without knowing as a third of those with Covid are asymptomatic. The programme doesn't replace the other measures that we have in school to minimise the risks of infection. Lateral flow testing is designed to offer an additional level of protection for those who are attending school.

## **Remote Achiever Assemblies**

My next Remote Learning Achievers Assembly will take place on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February at 2.00 pm. I will be contacting those parents whose children have been selected by their teachers for giving a valiant effort with their remote learning, later today. It has been lovely to see how everyone has been getting on at home and I've loved seeing the children share their work with the group. I really am missing everyone.

Congratulations to all those children both in school and at home who have received a gold card this week (I lost count at 18) or house points.

## **Food Vouchers for Children Entitled to Benefit Related Free School Meals**

Vouchers are in the process of being arranged for children entitled to benefit related free school meals to cover the half term period. Further information will be sent out shortly.

If anyone's circumstances have changed and you think that your child may now be entitled to benefit related free school meals, please get in touch with the school office who will be happy to assist you in making an application.

## **Interactive Zoom Sessions**

Details of the Interactive Zoom sessions offered to each year group next week will be sent out via ParentMail by Mrs Stein later today. You will be able to see the timetable for the week, enabling you to plan accordingly. With two members of our Year R team still recovering from Covid and on a phased return to work, the next interactive sessions for the Reception children will take place during the week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> February.

It will help the children to make the most of the sessions, if they adopt the same mind-set that they would in class. We have had a couple of children who have attended the sessions in their pyjamas and this of course isn't suitable for school learning.

### **Parking in Lockholt Close**

With lower numbers of children in school, I would expect to have seen fewer cars in Lockholt Close. Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case and in some instances, especially around the main entrance, parking has been dangerous. Please can I ask that you show consideration for our neighbours in the Close and avoid parking there. We are very fortunate to have the Chimney's car park so close to school to provide a safe place to park.

### **Support with Technology for Remote Learning**

Just a further reminder, that should anyone else need help with technology to support their child's learning at home, then please complete the form below to identify the ways in which help would be beneficial.

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ynpWSsYy6kWKTLrBMaHw\\_-yhziNeRdVLT6o2clwToipUN000RERITTEwRUVRWk9FSDBENTZEMFJPTS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ynpWSsYy6kWKTLrBMaHw_-yhziNeRdVLT6o2clwToipUN000RERITTEwRUVRWk9FSDBENTZEMFJPTS4u)

Please let us know if you are struggling with the devices that you have at home or don't have WiFi and would benefit from an increase to your mobile data allowance in order to enable your children to get online. We don't currently have any further devices that can be distributed but we can add you to the waiting list.

### **Latest Government Guidance**

The latest Government guidance on Coronavirus can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Please remember to notify the school in the event that your child demonstrates symptoms of coronavirus or if they are self-isolating as someone in their household has symptoms and is undergoing testing.

Take care and stay safe.

Kind Regards

Jill Talbot

Headteacher