



An Academy

3rd January 2021

Dear Boughton Families

Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you were able to spend time with your loved ones during the Christmas break.

At the time of writing, there is much speculation in the media and union pressure on the government to keep primary schools closed. I felt it was important, therefore, to write to parents as we start this new year and new term, with as much information as I have at this point in time.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Until directed to close, we plan to remain open to all pupils.

My hope is that we will remain open as normal to all pupils, however we have to ensure that everyone in our school community is kept safe. Our measures in school were very successful last term and we need to maintain these. Therefore, we must all play our part in ensuring we are managing distancing, hand washing and use of face-coverings when needed.

Face-coverings remain mandatory for adults working in school when in communal spaces, for parents/carers when dropping off or picking up and for any visitors to school (unless medically exempt). We will keep our staggered timings, entrances and exits the same as they were last term, using the front "car park" area as a waiting place for parents collecting siblings from KS2.

As before, please follow the guidance if your child shows symptoms of Covid 19 or tests positive without symptoms. You can find the current guidance [here](#).

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

There is every possibility of a national decision regarding school closures being made in the next few days or weeks and we will respond accordingly when that happens. Similarly, local conditions and a further rise in rates of infection could see Northamptonshire face the same restrictions as other counties and boroughs.

I am mindful that a further school closure places a great deal of pressure on families at an already difficult time but it is completely out of my control. We need, therefore, to be prepared both to open as normal and to close at short notice (with the continued hope that the latter doesn't happen).

If there is a national closure, Boughton Primary would remain open to the children of Critical Workers and those identified as children with additional vulnerabilities. With that in mind, I have prepared a new Critical Worker form for parents to complete. The list of these categories was updated on 31st December 2020 and can be found [here](#). Parents will need to check the revised list carefully to make sure their job roles are covered, before completing the form.

Please be aware that this time around we are attempting a much more blended approach to learning, so teachers will be very much focussed on the online offer, in order that all pupils have as equitable an

experience as we can create. Therefore, there are some important notes for parents to consider before registering their child:

Pupils who remain at home will access remote learning during any period of closure. Pupils in school will be in bubbles, the aim will be to maintain one year group per bubble but this will be completely dependent upon the pressures upon our staffing levels and whether the guidance asks us to reduce pupil numbers within bubbles, as previously instructed. It is very likely that in-school bubbles will be managed by a range of school staff, not your child's class teacher, as teachers will be focussing on the blended learning offer for all children. The staff leading each bubble will be supporting the access to the online learning being shared with pupils at home, to try and make sure the offer is as equitable as we can make it.

Where possible, unless in exceptional circumstances, we ask that you use this facility only if parents are critical workers and have no alternative. Unlike 2020, it is envisaged that any periods of closure will be for the purposes of "circuit breaking" rather than for an indefinite time.

The link to the form is [here](#).

In the event of a single bubble closure, due to a positive COVID-19 test within the staff or pupil body, teachers are in the process of preparing two weeks of remote learning materials for use as and when needed. This may look slightly different according to the age and stage of the children and staff will be discussing the offer within their key stage teams to ensure consistency as far as possible. We are trying our best not to be taken by surprise when these situations arise but we are all only human, so do bear with us; we thank our amazing parents for their ongoing support!

CATCH UP PLANS

You will be aware, from my October letter, that the government has allocated some funding to all schools to enable pupils to catch up. Schools are free to decide how to utilise these funds and can be flexible in their use; the funding is not ring-fenced or attached to individual pupils. The funding is allocated to the budget in three payments, in the autumn, spring and summer terms and is for this academic year only.

The first tranche came into the budget in October and we used it to make an increase in teaching assistant hours. A small amount was also used to purchase resources for a whole school intervention, our "Making Bodies Stronger" challenge, which is focused on further developing our use of the Kinetic Letters scheme in supporting children's strength and dexterity, in turn leading to automaticity in their letter formation and writing. This intervention is led by each class teacher and involves the children completing timed challenges that develop their core strength, shoulder and hand dexterity, in order that letter formation becomes much easier for them. This will continue during the coming term.

We have also introduced "target time" in each class (Year 1 upwards) where children focus on particular areas for short periods e.g. when they arrive in the morning or after breaks and lunchtime; the purpose being that having short, frequent practice of a skill will help to embed it. For some children this will be linked to writing or letter formation; for others it will be key times table facts or spellings. This is something which will continue and develop during the coming term; a short period of target time frees up the teacher to work with a small group or individual whilst everyone is practising something relevant to them individually.

Research shows that the best form of intervention is Quality First Teaching, i.e. the teaching and learning on offer in the classroom on a daily basis. Any form of group or individual intervention is supplementary to this, not a replacement for it.

The next amount will come into the budget this term. I have advertised for a part-time teaching assistant, on a fixed-term contract, whose sole purpose will be to work with individuals, pairs and small groups,

'Excellence through Effort and Enjoyment'

This term's value is Respect.

working on their specific targets. Interviews will take place within the next week and I hope to be able to begin this next part of the catch up plan as soon as possible.

Given that we are still trying to function in a COVID-safe way, I am mindful of the impact of having one person working with children across bubbles; in other words, should a child they work with test positive, or the adult themselves, there is an implication for self-isolation or even bubble closure across the school if children or other adults are then identified as close contacts. As always, we will do all we can to mitigate the risks, but there are no guarantees for any of us when working in close proximity. However, I have to balance this risk with the need to ensure the children's academic needs are being met fully and, therefore, we will continue to develop our whole class, group and individual intervention work as safely as we can.

FINALLY...

Throughout the pandemic we have maintained a focus on the children's social and emotional well-being. This remains as important now as it was back in March 2020. I want our school to be a place filled with laughter, joy and fun, alongside high quality-first teaching and everything that is needed to ensure children make the academic progress they should. As adults we know that we need to be "in the right place" in order to learn and make the best of ourselves; the same applies to our children. Therefore, we will keep our focus on our school values and our learning superheroes, and will do our best to help every child be the best version of themselves.

With very best wishes

Mary James
Head Teacher