

Hill Top CE Primary School

Newsletter - 10th January 2020

Good Morning Parents / Carers,

With the first week of Spring Term under our belts, we are pleased that we have been able to settle relatively smoothly into a new routine, offering in-school provision for our most vulnerable children and those from our critical worker families whilst providing online remote teaching to all our children at home. We have been able to reach this point thanks to the tireless efforts of staff in preparing and improving our systems whilst adapting to ever-changing circumstances. We will continue to improve these further. We also recognise the support, frustrations you are facing and patience you are showing in this ever changing environment - many of my staff are parents themselves and face similar challenges. We do understand your situations and are grateful for the words of encouragement you have been sending us. We will not forget this.

There has been further guidance and U-turns over the weekend, as a result of which we will have to make further adaptations.

What is clear from this week, however, is that the number of pupils eligible to attend school under the critical worker provision is much higher (10x) than during the first lockdown. We therefore need to ensure that we can accommodate those most in need whilst recognising that we must continue to do everything that we can to keep staff and pupils as safe as possible in school in light of recent Covid-19 developments.

As I am sure you will understand, running a dual system of educating and supervising children safely (whilst also trying to maintain year group bubbles) in school whilst providing remote learning to those children at home places an additional logistical staffing burden on the school as teachers are deployed to online teaching whilst staff are still required in the classrooms for those being educated in school. The extremely rapid rate of transmission of the virus at the moment means that we must do everything we can to protect the Hill Top community: pupils, parents and staff alike.

The guidance from the Department for Education updated this weekend reiterates that whilst children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required, **parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.**

Many councils have been in contact with the major public sector employers and asked them to work with HR departments and managers to help employees flexibly

juggle the demands of home schooling and work. Many have also asked local employers not to issue a blanket organisational letter in place of individual ones.

For our part, we must stress that places in school for critical worker children are finite and we ask that you only take up a place if absolutely necessary. As a community we must ensure that there is space for our healthcare workers' children and other vital roles that are actively helping to fight the pandemic. Many of our critical workers, particularly hospital and frontline medical staff, will be working additional hours and covering multiple shifts and we want to ensure that we prioritise those with the most urgent need.

Accordingly, we are now asking you to review your needs and consider only sending your child to school if it is absolutely necessary in order to carry out your critical worker role. We may need to ask parents/carers to provide further individual evidence of their critical worker status using the published guidance. Parents should discuss any continuing difficulties with their own employer's HR department.

It is our desire is to accommodate parents' needs as far as possible whilst keeping children and staff in school safe but, just like other schools, we are balancing difficult priorities. While we have carried out all the required risk assessments and put the relevant procedures in place to keep school safe, we recognise that younger children in particular find it very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain social distancing. For this reason, if we can find ways to reduce the number of children in school on any day, especially in the younger groups, this would reduce even further the risk of spreading infection.

Please take some time this weekend if you can to review your own situation and consider where you can reduce your reliance on your children having to come into the school building. With that in mind, please look out for a simple questionnaire that I hope to get out to you later today where you can indicate, (for the coming week in the first instance) when you will require your child to come into school.

There has been a further U-turn on Nursery children, where the Nursery is attached to a school, and their attendance. We are still exploring the implications for this and will be in touch with Nursery parents separately as soon as we can consider the logistics - please bear with us.

We hope to facilitate the distribution of as many laptops as we can for those of you who struggle to access remote learning because of lack of appropriate devices. This further distribution will begin tomorrow - but please be aware that we are still awaiting a significant delivery of new net books - they are due this week.

Thank you in advance for your help and support in this matter.

Des Martin
Head Teacher