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Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2021



Dear Parents and Carers,

It is hard to believe that this time last week was 'New Year's Day'. What an eventful start to 2021 already!

I am astounded by the debacle and the position that schools have been placed in over the last week. That being said, I am so proud of what we have achieved as a school for our children, families and staff team.

We were inundated with requests for critical workers, with over 100 applications received; thankfully, we have worked with yourselves through this. We even managed to open for critical workers on Tuesday, after very little notice from the government's announcement, which several parents have appreciated.

With our high number of critical worker places combined with the offer of places for our vulnerable children, we have 105 children who are accessing school on a part or full-time basis.

As well as this, we are providing remote learning and feedback to another 260 children.

I cannot even begin to explain the complexities and logistics around this, however, I really need to stress how hard the whole staff team are working to enable us to offer the best for our children and families. Please ensure that any communication with our staff team continues to be respectful, including any comments online. As always, this incredible team are having to respond to huge changes on a daily basis and deserve the respect that so many of you always show. This partnership is crucial in ensuring our children have the best life chances.

With regard to our position on Nursery places: due to the large number of children currently accessing school and the staffing required for the home learning preparation, responding and monitoring, as well as the many other additions to our usual roles which the partial opening has created, at this time, our school position regarding Nursery provision remains the same. We are able to offer Nursery places for children of critical workers or those deemed vulnerable. If there are any further developments with this, we will keep you updated.

I would like to thank our wonderful children who have been completing their remote learning; the take up has been excellent. Thank you to all of you for doing such a brilliant job in balancing family life, home learning, and in many cases, working from home. I take my hat off to you!

Be kind to yourselves - this week has been a huge adjustment for us all and you are all doing your best. If you are struggling to manage all of the home learning set, I would recommend prioritising the core (Maths and English) learning videos/tasks and ensuring your child is able to access their 'Google Meets' session next week.

A daily PE task will also be linked on your child's home learning. For children in school, you will be taking part in these, but we would also ask you to wear your PE kits on the following day:

Bubbles	Children to wear PE kit to school on this day
Years 5 and 6	Tuesday
EYFS Years 1 and 2	Wednesday
Years 3 and 4	Thursday



## Here are a few questions and answers that you may find useful:

### What is different about the home learning this time?

During the previous 'Lockdown', the focus was on setting tasks which reinforced learning that had already taken place in school. The main change this time is on the importance of children continuing to learn the curriculum as intended. This is why the learning that is being set shows a teacher modelling and teaching the children for many of the core sessions such as phonics, writing and mathematics.

These video clips are the most important part in supporting your child with their new learning. We would recommend that they watch these, even if it is not always possible to complete the learning activity set.

### The Government keep mentioning all of the millions of laptops they have provided schools with; how many have Rothwell Primary School received from the Government?

As we did not have to close a bubble during Autumn 2, we were not able to access any laptops. Now there is a 'Lockdown', we have been told we are able to access a very small number of laptops (less than one per class). These have been ordered though we are still waiting to receive them.

### My children are in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2; can I just have a paper pack?

As mentioned above, as children need to watch the videos set on Google Classroom or Tapestry in order to access new learning, a paper pack would not support with this. The children must be taught the learning content, which is why the videos are crucial.

### The school down the road is doing something different - why is this?

It is important to reiterate, each and every school will be in a different position in terms of: the number of staff shielding or isolating; the number of critical workers they have; the number of children classed as vulnerable; the number of children on roll, plus many more factors. As always, the leadership team and governing body will make decisions based on what is right for our school.

## **Rothwell Primary School Offer:**

Children at home and at school will receive the same curriculum and core learning. This is to ensure all children receive an offer of high quality learning, as well as ensuring that children who are in school some days and at home others are be able to continue with their learning.

## **Our Remote Learning Offer:**

- ✓ For children learning remotely at home each day, we will continue with our current offer of English, Mathematics and a wider curriculum topic (plus phonics for EYFS and KS1 children) using Google Classroom. We have ensured the quality videos are focused on teaching new skills and concepts; we hope you find these helpful. The same offer will be provided for children in Reception and Nursery using Tapestry.
- ✓ Your child can access 'Rising Stars' to read their online reading books, which they have been allocated.
- ✓ Children in KS1 and KS2 are encouraged to access their TT Rockstars and Spelling Frame accounts.

## **Additions to Home Learning for Next Week. (WC 11/1/21)**

- ✓ From Monday, home learning will be released at 8:45am, along with a recorded message from a member of the staff team. This message will welcome the children to the morning, share any key learning points from the previous day and introduce the learning for the day.
- ✓ Children in KS1/KS2 will be invited to a live Google Meet session with a member of staff in their phase. Please check Google Classroom for this information. The meeting time for your child's group will be posted in your child's Google Classroom Stream the day before the planned session to help with planning. The purpose

of this meeting is to support children at home, providing them with an opportunity to connect with a member of staff they are familiar with, and with other children in their class who are also working at home. We know this is one way to support children's well-being and are looking forward to this. Children in EYFS will be using Zoom for these meetings; an invite will be sent on Tapestry next week.

- ✓ During the week, a pre-recorded assembly will be added to your child's Google Stream/Tapestry account.
- ✓ A daily physical challenge or link will be posted on Google Classroom.
- ✓ During the week, stories or chapters from the class novel will be added to your child's Google Stream/Tapestry account.

### **Other Ideas That We Are Exploring:**

We are currently exploring ways for staff to use Google Meets to:

- ⇒ Deliver live Guided Reading group sessions, or additional reading opportunities for children at home.
- ⇒ Provide speech and language support for children who are at home.
- ⇒ Provide follow up sessions (where appropriate) for children who are finding the learning that has been set difficult.

With the plans for more opportunities for remote, face to face contact with children at home, we need all children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to be able to access Google Classroom so they are able to see their friends and meet with the staff member hosting the session. This is really important in supporting children's social, emotional and mental health, and I really would urge you to access this. We are always happy to support families with this.

Next week, we will be trialing a small number of the above elements and will contact a few children to take part in these in order to prepare for the coming weeks. Please do not worry if another parent says their child has done this and your child has not; it will only be a small number of children in specific year groups.

As we venture further into this 'whole new world' using 'Google Meets' and other recording and live tools, please be kind and recognise that this is not something the staff team are used to doing. Like many of you, we are adjusting to help give your children the best chance in terms of wellbeing and learning.

There will be more information to follow on Monday regarding expectations, and guidance to ensure that remote learning follows all safeguarding protocols.

Thank you for your incredible support and positivity throughout this pandemic regarding the way we have worked with you and provided a great offer for children at home and in school. It really has helped us to ride this rollercoaster with a smile! Please continue to send your positive messages of support, as these are often shared with staff and really help the team to feel valued and appreciated.

Here is just one of the many comments we have received: *'We would just like to pass on our thanks for the excellent home learning that has been provided. That staff have managed to provide resources that are both accessible and stretching at a moments' notice, whilst many of them will have been trying to make arrangements for their own families, is phenomenal. We appreciate that getting this up and running was no small task and that the conditions around this lockdown were much more stressful for staff than they needed to be.'*

*We are also grateful for the contingency planning that you did in advance, particularly the work that was done in school to build ICT skills. This is a life-saver for those of us who are working from home whilst our kids are home learning.'*

Have a wonderful weekend. Thank you very much to the incredible staff team - you are just fantastic!

Many thanks

Leila Rothenburg

Headteacher

