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Parent Newsletter – Friday 11th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Here we are at the end of our first week back in school in what seems like a very long time. In fact, it *has been* a very long time! It has been so delightful to see the children again, albeit in socially distanced groups and what has made me very happy and proud is the way the children have been so excited to be back in school and the way they have engaged with all the staff in implementing our new procedures for hand washing, following distancing rules and all the new things they have had to get used to.

Many of the children have seemed fairly tired by the end of the day – I wonder if they've been wiped out at home in the evenings as they have probably been used to a more flexible timetable recently. Make sure they get lots of sleep this weekend – It is a long term!

The teachers have spent a fair amount of time this week rehearsing routines and bedding them in, but also making time to speak with the children about how they have got on during our lengthy enforced break. This will continue to be the case as it is very important to us that the children feel reassured and comfortable in school. The teachers are also spending time analyzing the children's learning; where they are with their core skills, and we have already begun to implement our catch-up curriculum. More to follow on this later.

I think the children need a break this weekend so for this weekend only we are not setting homework. From next week, homework will be set according to the timetable we will publish to you next week. Each class will send out a newsletter next week, spelling out all the requirements and expectations for the children in each year. Homework will be set virtually and more information will follow very soon.

We welcomed our new Reception class to school this week, part time. Red Class start full time schooling on Monday 21st September. They have been coming eagerly into school and really enjoying their first days. Welcome to Margaret Roper!

Welcome also to any new families that have joined us. Usually we'd have a coffee morning for all new families at the start of the year, but we just can't at the moment. Do know that you are welcome and we are very happy that you are part of the Margaret Roper family.

I know that many of you will be aware that John Fisher has had a confirmed case in Year 8 and consequently the entire Y8 cohort has closed for 14 days self-isolation. This underlines the gravity of the situation and the vital importance of all of us doing everything we can to minimize infection and keep each other healthy. So, to paraphrase a politician I heard once, please 'Stay Alert'.

Further to this, I have been in dialogue with the Director of Education and the Director of Public Health over the last couple of days about the difficulty in obtaining a prompt Covid test, in the event that one is needed. The discussion has been useful and has helped to make sure that we are applying the rules scrupulously. Clearly, testing availability is a problem, one reflected in the media recently, and this may be the case for the long term. But testing in the event that trigger points are reached is vital to us and I encourage you to follow these instructions and to work with us openly and honestly. May I refer you to the attached document: 'Reminder about rules around self-isolating' which clearly spells out the trigger points for testing.

Our school has taken the decision to inform parents in the bubble if a pupil is referred for testing. This was to ensure that vigilance is maintained and in the interests of full disclosure. In discussion with the doctor in charge of public health, it was suggested to me that we only alert parents in the event of a positive case, but for the moment we are continuing with our policy of alerting bubbles on referral. If we find that this causes difficulties because pupils develop normal colds and flu symptoms to the extent that we are reporting too frequently and the costs outweigh the benefits for parents then we will review this policy and will inform you. I hope this is clear. I'll continue to keep you updated as often as is necessary.

Just one more item for added clarity. If a pupil in another school; for instance, in John Fisher, is isolating because their bubble has closed it is not necessary for siblings here to isolate also unless the sibling develops symptoms. Similarly, if a bubble here has to close following a positive test (and we certainly hope and pray this does not happen), siblings of pupils in that bubble who are well but required to self-isolate do not need to stop attending school. I'll write more on this if the eventuality arises.

A lot of information I know. I hope it is helpful.

Further Covid 19 – information

This week has been very useful in terms of looking at our procedures and evaluating what works well and what needs adjustment or strengthening. I know you've generally all been excellent at social distancing at pick up and drop off times, but there are still some bottlenecks and times when parents are standing too close. It's human nature to approach someone for a talk, but you all understand that we need to check this impulse and keep at least 2m distance. Sometimes that's very hard. I'm going to suggest that all adults wear face coverings when the playground is open for parents. This will apply to the staff as well. Let's try this for a week or two and see how we get on. I think any precaution we can employ is sensible.

Meetings – Similarly, we are reviewing our meetings protocol, both in school and with parents. Within school we have been restricting face to face meetings to absolutely essential ones and using e-communication for all other purposes, including assemblies and staff meetings/training. We're tightening the rules on this even more in school, with no more than 4 adults in a room together and face coverings will now be worn at all times in meetings, even when socially distanced. Applying this to meetings with parents we are asking the question – can this meeting be carried out using e-communication. If yes, then this is the preferred option. If it is important to meet face to face then we will manage this by having as few essential adults present as possible and by using a specially set up meeting room. So, if you have requested, or do request a meeting, be prepared for the fact that we might suggest a telephone conversation or a virtual meeting. It is in the interests of everyone.

A reminder to Y6 parents that we have a virtual meeting on 22nd September at 7pm related to secondary transition. A zoom link has been sent out earlier in the week.

Diary Dates

You may be wondering why we haven't published a diary of dates for the school year. Of course, you will also have realized that many events normally in the school calendar need a lot of re-thinking to ensure that we remain Covid compliant. I have been discussing with Canon John how we might carry out masses and liturgies and so on. Canon John is very keen to visit school safely to meet the children and we will continue our discussion next week about how we can achieve this. One thought is that we might have class liturgies broadcast by zoom. I'd welcome thoughts from parents about whether you would find this useful? Similarly, our events schedule is hampered by the question marks about the viability of PTA events and whole school events. I'm continuing work on this and with Janet Dawson who is the interim chair of the PTA. I'll get back to you soon. We do want to involve you but have to think this through very carefully indeed.

Wednesday Word

In past years we have sent out the Wednesday Word in paper format. This has changed to digital format this year and I will usually try to send it out on a Wednesday, as the name suggests. However today I'm sending it on a Friday. I know that masses in parishes are being celebrated again but some of you may be finding it difficult to attend physically at present, not least because of the need for reduced numbers. If you are finding it difficult to keep your children focused in prayer or in a virtual mass, may I suggest that you use the Wednesday word to run a short prayer liturgy with your children and family. It doesn't need to be long, can be very child-centered and may prove to be very worthwhile. Give it a try. Its important that we plan time to be in the presence of God.

In addition, I also attach a prayer that I found which I used in Assembly this morning. It is about the start of the new school year and I liked its simplicity and its power. You could say it each morning on the way to school?

Stars of the week

In our virtual assembly this morning we said well done to the following stars of the week from each class. Red class will join this once they start full time.

Orange Class – Isaiah & Aron

Yellow Class – Ava & Thomas

Green Class – Elsa and Michael

Blue Class – Alfie & Nathan

Indigo Class – James S & Kaylie

Amethyst Class – Inca & Shaver

Violet Class – Oscar & Lisanne

A thank you from Barnados

We received a lovely letter from Barnardos for the fundraising we carried out prior to lockdown. I attach it to the newsletter for information.

I hope you have a lovely weekend

Dermot Mooney
Headteacher

Attachments

If you are looking at this on the website, please find these documents on the Covid-19 section or as a separate document on the newsletter drop down.

- Wednesday word
- Prayer for new school year
- Barnardo's thank you letter
- Reminder about rules around self – isolation
- Advice for parents during Coronavirus