

EXWICK HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Spring Term – January 19th 2021

Website: www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Dear Parents & Carers

I hope you are all safe and well. The beginning of 2021 has certainly been a challenging one for everyone. Thank you to you all for coping with the stress and uncertainty that last two weeks have brought and for the many positive comments of support we have received here at school. If you are a critical worker, thank you for keeping the country going. If you are now having to support your child with remote learning – thank you for taking on this essential role. If you are trying to juggle both – you are a hero and my thoughts are with you!

Our school continues to be partially open, providing essential childcare for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children in these challenging times. It continues to be vital that this childcare is only used by those who need it, to protect the children and staff attending; I am hugely grateful to you all for your support and understanding of this. If you have any questions about childcare provision and eligibility, please don't hesitate to contact us by email or telephone. Our school office is manned on a daily basis between 8.50am and 3.20pm. We currently have up to 15 children registered in each class and have been so grateful to parents for only sending their child in when they need to, as we know that this reduces the risk of transmission. We have also been very fortunate as a primary school to be able to use testing facilities at West Exe to ensure that the full staff team have received weekly Covid 19 lateral flow tests; this will help to identify anyone who may carry the virus but be asymptomatic. Thankfully, these have all been negative so far (our next test is scheduled for tomorrow!)

Critical Workers: The numbers of COVID cases continue to cause concern and the government updated its guidance last Friday to make it clear that children of critical workers **should stay at home if they can**. Critical worker places in school should only be used if the child not being in school would prevent the critical worker from attending their critical role. Where there is a parent or carer at home, the best place for your child is at home. If this updated guidance means you no longer need the place allocated to you this week, please email admin@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk to let us know that your child will not be attending. We currently have a high number of children attending school on a daily basis and so are operating a waiting list for places. I apologise that we are unable to accommodate everyone but hope that you understand that we have to operate as safely as possible during the lockdown period. This is particularly important when you consider the fact that we are unable to use supply staff at this time should any members of the team here at Exwick Heights have to self-isolate. Please can I ask that places are applied for only if your role is deemed critical to the national response to Covid 19 or Brexit, in line with the Government's guidance. Unfortunately, the list of jobs within the guidance to illustrate positions that could be considered critical, such as food delivery, has led to applications for places because individuals deliver fast food. Please be sensible! We have to look into every application to ensure that the waiting list is fair to everyone resulting in considerable time being wasted. We know that the current lockdown situation is awful for everyone – but if we can minimise the number of people who are out and about, the restrictions will be eased more quickly.

Learning in School: The learning in school will follow as closely as possible to the home learning set. If children attend school for some days and are then at home for others they will need to keep up by doing the work at home too, or they will be behind when they come back to school.

Online Learning: I know that this is a challenge for all of our families. I want to reassure you all that we do understand this and are happy to support in any way that we can. Our biggest difficulty, as a school, is making sure that the work and our approach is suitable for all of our families. I recognise that some of you would prefer to have more work set, whilst others find the Online Learning quite overwhelming. Please be reassured that we do understand the challenges and want to support.

I firmly believe that in the current climate, the mental health of our families has to take priority over everything else. If you are struggling with what has been set and would like to work in a different way, I fully support this. It is important that both you and your child or children are comfortable, confident and calm when approaching school work. Anything that you manage to do will help your child significantly, particularly if the lockdown is extended, but we also understand that in some households, it may not be possible and we will address this and support you in any way that we can – don't hesitate to contact us. Please do not feel anxious about this – we are all living in exceptional times!

Sharing Children's Work – Work and photos can either be shared with school via Google Classroom, or can be emailed to the usual homelearning email account for their year group. We have had enquiries asking for the email address for homelearning, so I have listed them below as a reminder:

Nursery and Reception: fshomelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 1: y1homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 2: y2homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 3: y3homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 4: y4homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 5: y5homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Year 6: y6homelearning@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Sharing a device- If you have two or more children accessing Google Classroom on Wonde, you may find that one child is able to log in easily whilst the other experiences difficulty. This is because the device that you are using has 'remembered' one child's log in details over the other child. If you are experiencing difficulty with this, Mr Emerton has the following tips:

- 1) Use separate web browsers for each account. Eg log in to one account with Chrome and the other account with Firefox.
- 2) Use incognito mode for the second account. However, for videos to work you will need to unblock 3rd party cookies. https://storage.googleapis.com/gweb-uniblog-publish-prod/original_images/03_Incognito.gif
- 3) Use Chrome for both accounts but make sure you are logged out of one Google account before you access the other one. You can ensure you are logged out by going to <https://accounts.google.com>

I hope this helps, please don't hesitate to contact the school office if you experience any problems and we will happily help!

DFE Support: I'm delighted to be able to share that schools can now request help to increase mobile data allowances for children and young people who:

- do not have fixed broadband at home
- cannot afford additional data for their devices
- are experiencing disruption to their face-to-face education.

Or, if increasing mobile data isn't a suitable option for some children, we can also request 4G wireless routers. If you think either of these options would help you with remote learning please email:

admin@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk to register your interest.

Mental Health: The current lockdown situation has been challenging for everyone in different ways. Whether old or young, I would suggest that we have all been under a significant amount of pressure as we have adjusted. Stress affects us all and so I am keen to again share the attached pamphlet, which was attached to the email with this newsletter. The pamphlet is produced by an organisation called Young Devon and offers tips, tricks and techniques for maintaining positive mental health during the lockdown and beyond. I feel the suggested activities are fantastic for all ages. I hope you find it helpful.

Supervision: Although the school has not been contacted by the individual affected, I have been made aware that a post was placed on Facebook last night stating that a boy who attended Exwick Heights yesterday struck a car with a stick as they passed it on their way home. I have no further information other than what was posted, which I have copied verbatim below for information:

'EXWICK HEIGHTS PARENTS! Not only did a young lad hit my car when I passed with a stick, he then run in front of a car coming the other way, could have been a very different story.'

Please can I ask all parents to speak to their children about their behaviour and safety when travelling to and from school, and around the local area. This incident could have had horrendous consequences for the child involved and has also impacted on every child as their behaviour negatively reflects upon our whole school community, which seems very unfair.

Re-opening: We have had a number of parents contact the school to ask when we are re-opening. Unfortunately, as with the Government announcement that schools would be closed to the majority of pupils, we are unlikely to be informed of any decision to ease the lockdown until it is announced nationally to the public. I'm afraid we have no insight as to when this will be.

Please be reassured that we understand that the thought of returning to school will be daunting for many. We will do everything in our power to support the children (and you) with this, when things begin to change. Our priority will be on making sure that everyone is as safe as possible and so there may need to be changes to the way that we

usually work initially. Please be reassured that we will plan for all eventualities and will be prepared when it is decided that it is safe for the lockdown to be eased.

However, at the moment, this is not something that is happening imminently. The priority continues to be that everyone should remain safely at home wherever possible in line with Government guidance.

FSM Vouchers: The Government scheme, using Eden Red to send food vouchers to eligible families (those in receipt of income related Free School Meals) is now up and running and we have finally been given access to order vouchers for all of our families not currently attending school and in receipt of FSM. We have emailed all of those entitled today, having ordered vouchers for the next four weeks initially.

Please can anyone who should have access to this scheme but has not received their voucher contact school to inform us? I do not want anyone to be left in difficulties because of an unnecessary delay. We would also like to ask our FSM families to inform us if they do not receive their Edenred FSM vouchers by Tuesday 26th January.

Similarly, if your personal situation has changed and you think that you may be eligible for financial support, please don't hesitate to contact school (we are available to take phone calls) during the school hours of 8.50am and 3.20pm, and we will direct you to where to apply. Please note that vouchers are only available to those in receipt of FSM, this is different to Universal infant free school meals (UFSM) which provides free school meals to pupils in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2.

Keeping Safe Online: With so many of us utilising the Internet to keep in touch at the moment, it seems sensible to again share some online safety tips. I know that there is nothing new here – but I thought it might be helpful to share these tips with your child. Please feel free to share this newsletter with them and remind them that this is designed to help and protect them...



Prioritise safety

Teach children not to give out personal information, like their name, address, telephone number, or which school they go to.



Set parental controls.

Agree a list of websites your child is allowed to visit, and remember to check the minimum age limit on services like Facebook and YouTube.



Discuss their activity.

Take an interest in their online world. Talk to them about their favourite websites, videos, and their online friends



Set boundaries.

Establish time limits for activities such as using the internet and games consoles. Make sure to set aside time for “unplugged” family activity.



Be open.

Let them know that they can tell you about anything that happens on the internet, and that you'll listen without judgement.

Coronavirus Updates: The latest guidance from the Government can be found here:

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

Finally, I just want to send you all our very best wishes. Please keep yourselves as safe as you can during this challenging period. We are certainly missing seeing you all and can't wait to see those working at home on the other side of this!

Best wishes,

Mrs C Neal
Headteacher