

## EXWICK HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL



**Autumn Term – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020**  
**Website: [www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk](http://www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk)**

Dear Parents & Carers,

Wow! It is hard to believe that we have reached the end of the autumn term. It has been an incredible term and I would not be lying if I stated that it has been one of the most challenging that we have ever experienced here at school! As a community, we have pulled together to protect and to help each other through a year unlike any other. From teaching in something called a pod (and then a bubble) to herding cows in Exwick Lane and hosting online meetings with Father Christmas, it really has been an unusual year!

We have been incredibly fortunate, as a result of your vigilance, not to have had a positive result for any member of our school (staff or children) so far. According to advice from the Department for Education (the DFE), we will have to wait for another week to know if we have managed to successfully avoid Covid 19 this term so I am now keeping everything crossed! I feel incredibly fortunate to work in such a fantastic community and want to thank each and every one of you for your amazing support.

Despite the challenges, your children have been utterly remarkable. They have made me smile each day as they have bounced into school and we have been delighted by their determination and hard work. They should all be congratulated on their progress and enthusiasm for learning – thank you so much, children! I would also like to thank the staff here at Exwick Heights for their hard work to ensure that school has been as 'usual' for the children. The team have worked so hard to ensure that our pupils feel safe, happy and supported – things which can so easily be taken for granted and are so essential if a child is to learn. They have managed to juggle the challenges of Covid 19 whilst keeping a big smile on their faces and I want to wish each and every member of staff a huge thank you and a well-earned rest!



**Father Christmas** - Over the last few weeks, we have had lots of exciting events here at school. The first one that I would like to share is Father Christmas' visits to each class. Despite the fact these visits were virtual, it was still a magical experience. Each class received a present to share and enjoy too!

**Christmas Dinner** – Again, this was a little different this year, with the children eating in their classrooms, but it was delightful to hear carols playing across the airwaves – and the excitement caused by each child receiving a cracker was wonderful to see! The amazing kitchen team served an incredible 498 Christmas dinners! No longer will I panic about cooking for my family at Christmas time...

**Christmas Music** – We hope you have enjoyed listening to some live Christmas music whilst on the school run this week. I would like to thank Mrs Mabin for playing the piano during collection time to help to make the week a little more Christmassy. We've all missed singing this term and cannot wait to enjoy this as soon as it is safe to do so!



**Clubs** – I hope that you all received an email sharing information about clubs in the spring term this week, these can be **booked via schoolgateway from Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December.** We know how useful it is to have time to plan after school arrangements and so have set dates without yet knowing what impact there will be with regard to Covid 19. If restrictions are eased, we may need to cancel one week of clubs to allow us to hold parents meetings in February (we would only need to cancel if parent meetings are permitted as

a face to face meeting rather than a telephone consultation). We will inform parents of any changes to scheduled clubs in advance and apologise for any inconvenience caused.

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**Dr Bike** – We were really lucky to host Dr Bike here at school on Monday. The team from Sustrans serviced and repaired pupils' bikes in Years 4 to 6. Approximately 15 bikes in total were serviced. This is part of our on-going commitment to encourage children to travel to school in a sustainable and safe way.

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**Report a positive COVID-19 result** – If a member of our school community has a positive test result, it is imperative that we are informed as soon as possible so we are able to contact the PHE local health protection team (HPT) and the DfE. We have created the following email address for parents to use to **report a positive result for a child at our school only:** [reportpositive@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk](mailto:reportpositive@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk) Please note, this email address should not be used for any other communication. Through the first week of the holiday, this email address will be checked daily. After receiving notification of a positive test, we will follow the DfE guidance, seeking advice about the appropriate response from the above agencies. We will inform any person required to isolate, along with the wider school community of the positive case and required actions. This will be by both email and text message.

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**Animals on school site** – A polite reminder that whilst we all love animals here at Exwick Heights, we do not permit pet animals on the school grounds. This includes pets which are being carried. We have had several people attempt to smuggle animals into school under jackets recently (dogs, a ferret and even a rabbit!) Please do not do this. It can cause distress for others and particularly for the animal! Thank you.

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**Homelearning** – If time allows over the Christmas period, it would really help if some time could be spent with your child looking at general life skills. Since the lockdown period, we have noticed that more children are struggling in key areas such as using cutlery, tying shoelaces, and rapid recall of key spellings for their age and number facts (pairs of numbers that add to 10, 20 and 100 for our younger pupils and times tables for our older). Anytime rehearsing these skills, along with reading regularly, even just for a few minutes, would greatly benefit your child.

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**URGENT! Free School Meals over the Christmas Holidays – applications close tomorrow (Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December) at midnight.**

Devon County Council have put in place arrangements to provide supermarket vouchers to nearly 15,000 children across Devon who currently receive income related free school meals. These vouchers aim to help their families buy groceries over the Christmas holidays. I am keen to ensure that no person entitled to free school meals misses out on this vital support (please note that this is for children whose families receive financial support rather than pupils in Yr R to 2 who receive universal free school meals). I would like to strongly encourage all of our families to check whether they are entitled to receive this and so thought it would be sensible to remind all of our families that children whose parents are getting any of the following are entitled to free school meals:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods).
- Income Support (IS).
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA).
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (IRESA).
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, that does not exceed £16,190).

- Working Tax Credit run-on (the payment you get for a further 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit).

**How to apply**

You can apply through the [Devon Citizens Portal](#). This is the quickest and easiest way to apply and will result in you getting an instant decision. Alternatively, call the Education Helpline on 0345 155 1019.

**To benefit from the holiday voucher scheme, all applications must be made by midnight tomorrow, Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

I am also liaising with local charities who are keen to support anyone in need. If you have any concerns regarding the Christmas holiday, please do not hesitate to make contact.

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**Staffing** - Finally, I would like to wish our three expectant teachers, Mrs Wang, Mrs Glanville and Mrs Benham, every happiness as they begin their maternity leave during the Christmas holidays. They will be sorely missed by all of us!

I would also like to formally welcome their maternity cover teachers, Miss Webber, Mr Mann and Miss Ripper, to Exwick Heights Primary. We are delighted to be working with them and have really enjoyed getting to know them over the last term.

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I hope that you all enjoy an amazing Christmas. We wish you lots of magic, excitement and good health over the Christmas period and look forward to seeing you all on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January** next year!

With warm regards,

Mrs C. Neal

**Headteacher**

