

Dear Parents & Carers

We have reached the half term and hopefully it now won't be too long before things slowly return to normal... I am sure that, like me, you will be keen to see what the Government announce on the 22nd of February with regard to schools. I know that many of you have contacted school to ask about re-opening recently. Please be reassured that I will be in touch with you as soon as I hear anything!

As a school, we have continued to remain partially open, providing places for the incredible critical workers within our community. The school has also been able to offer this to our more vulnerable pupils to support them in this unprecedented time. I am incredibly grateful to the staff at school who have put the needs of others ahead of themselves, along with all critical workers, to keep our country going during this period of lockdown. You are all amazing! I have hated though, having to operate a waiting list for places here but it has been essential to ensure that we keep the Exwick community safe. The lower we can keep numbers attending, the less opportunity there is for the virus to spread.

I thought it might be sensible to remind everyone working hard at home that the half term is fast approaching. During this period, remote learning will not be set – we are well aware of how hard you have all been working! However, we are also aware that during the lockdown period, it is helpful to have something for children to do whilst we are very restricted. To this end, I thought it might be helpful to share information about some competitions that your child or children could enter, offering them a little more purpose whilst we are all stuck at home.

Ideas for Keeping Children occupied During Half Term...

Thank You NHS Cards – A local resident in Exwick has asked for children to design small, gift card sized cards, to show thanks to members of the NHS, particularly those at the RD&E for their amazing care. We are making post boxes on both sites for any cards that children would like to make and send. Cards should be small (gift tag sized) with the internal message simply stating 'Thank you NHS'. We have been asked to ensure that children don't sign the cards as they will be given to people who are unknown. The picture next to this paragraph shows some great examples that children in our Year 2 cohort designed.

Art Competition – The Royal Academy of Arts is holding its third Young Artists' Summer Show this year and is asking young people to submit work for exhibition. The Young Artists' Summer Show is a free, open submission exhibition for students aged 5 - 19 studying in the UK and British schools overseas. Last year, the exhibition featured an amazing range of artwork, from a galaxy of aliens to a super, massive shoe! The exhibits were truly inspirational and were selected by expert judges who had to sift through nearly 18,000 submissions to select 392 artworks to display in the on line gallery. We feel that this competition will engage many of our pupils and so we have registered our school for the competition. If your child would like to take part, they can submit artwork made of any materials. It can be anything from a painting, sculpture, photograph, installation or even a video piece. There is no theme so artworks can be of any subject. Submitting the artwork is completely free and is done online but this must be completed by an adult on behalf of the child.

If your child would like to enter, simply click this link and follow the instructions:

<https://youngartists.royalacademy.org.uk/>

World Book Day – This annual, international event is being celebrated on Thursday 4th March. We hope that everyone will be able to celebrate the magical world of books on this date with us, to help to promote reading to our children. As always, if your child would like to dress up as a book character, we would love to receive photographs of them and would like to share these in our blog if parents are happy for this to happen? Please remember that dressing up as your favourite book character does not have to involve having to spend money! Many characters in children's books wear normal clothes. If you have access to paper, or indeed old cereal boxes, making a book cover which can then be attached to your child's clothes is a simple idea which looks really effective. We are also keen to give all of our children an exciting experience and so would like to share a fantastic online event that is happening to help to bring children's literature alive. Arts Charity settlestories.org.uk will be recounting lesser known stories from Arabian Nights; there are two performances scheduled, one for children who are in KS1 and one for children in KS2:

KS1 performance ages 5-7 on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 9.30-10.15am

KS2 performance ages 7-11 on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 1.30-2.15pm

They will be using a platform called Crowdcast and it is free. To access it and gain more information, please follow this link:

https://www.settlestories.org.uk/whats_on/world-book-day-2021/?gclid=EAlaQobChMIzpyR4fXS7gIVh7PtCh0n3QufEAAYASAAEgl2OPD_BwE

Staffing – We are sadly bidding the lovely Mrs Denham, one of our fantastic teaching assistants, a fond farewell after the half term break as she moves into a new career working for Action for Children as a Family Support Worker. I have no doubt that she will really enjoy this challenging new role and am sure you will join me in wishing her every happiness and success. Wishing you every happiness and success, Mrs Denham!

Parent/Teacher Meeting – With a date hopefully being confirmed after the half term holiday for schools to begin to reopen fully, we have been thinking about how we might make the transition for children currently working remotely easier. As a staff, we thought that it might be sensible to offer parents and carers the opportunity to meet remotely with teachers to share information about how their children working remotely have progressed this half term to help to support the transition back into school. We know that many of you have already spoken with your child's teacher and shared information about what your child has found easy or difficult but if you haven't, you might want to book a slot with the teacher to discuss their work. The Government have shared that they will give schools (and parents) two weeks' notice of the date that schools will re-open. It is our intention to offer meetings in the week before the children return. As soon as the date is confirmed, I will send information to enable all parents and carers to book an appointment if they feel that this would be useful.

Staying Scam Aware - Among the difficulties Covid-19 has brought into our lives, it has given rise to an increase in scams as fraudsters try to exploit our uncertainty. Please see the attached flier prepared by Trading Standards, which outlines key scams to look out for at the moment and how to report an incident.

Online Safety – We are all spending far more time online during this lockdown period and so thought it might be helpful to signpost some sites to offer further information to protect children when they are online.

Parents guide to apps, games and social media sites: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Parental Controls: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

Advice about online games: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-games/>

National Online Safety Parent Guides: <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides>

Mental Health – With the stresses of a national lockdown, we have all become more aware of the importance of taking care of ourselves and supporting others. This half term has caused huge stress for families, both those who are attending school when their friends are at home, and for those who are at home when their friends are at school.

We have been looking at support for our families and would like to recommend the following website, which offers a downloadable wellbeing guidebook filled with tips, tools and activities to support children's mental health:

https://nowandbeyond.org.uk/happy-space?fbclid=IwAR0LBU7FsaiOo52GU_4G5B3B_ijArQNXqYEzIzCXtVlveZsK84WQitqeNfo

The above link will also share videos and links to help to keep children occupied. As always, please ensure that videos are watched by an adult first, to ensure that it is suitable for your children! Finally, the above website has a section dedicated to parents and carers to support them with helping their children. I hope you find it useful!

Here in Exeter, the YMCA are providing a free psychological wellbeing service is for 5-18 year olds and offers support and intervention for low-mood, anxiety, and behavioural difficulties. The following link can be used to learn more about this: <https://www.ymcaexeter.org.uk/cwpwellbeing/>

Keep Safe: 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 missing seeing you all.

I wish you all a very happy half term!

Best wishes,



Mrs C Neal, Headteacher