

EXWICK HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Easter Holiday– May 7th 2020

Website: www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Dear Parents & Carers

I wanted to write once more to wish you all well! Our last week of school being fully open as usual back in March seems like a lifetime ago now... I hope that you have managed to keep well and have been able to remain positive.

There is a lot of speculation in the media currently with regard to the **Government announcement** expected at the end of this week and what will happen next for schools. Please be reassured that this is firmly on our agenda at Exwick Heights. However, until we get clear instruction from the Government and Department for Education, we carry on as we are and will let you know as soon as possible about any changes. To suggest that the time spent away from school has somehow been wasted is a situation that, as a teacher, I don't recognise and it does our children and their families a disservice. In many ways, these last few weeks have been a utopia of learning; the most amazing learning has been taking place at home! We are so proud that children have worked their socks off under stressful, worrying and alien circumstances. So many parents at Exwick Heights Primary have risen to this challenge in a way that makes me quite emotional and I want to say a huge thank you to you all!

We will not receive advance information about what is being addressed in this week's announcement and so I thought it would be sensible to let you know that once we know what role schools will play when the lockdown situation begins to be eased, I will share further information. It is my intention to do this when we have clarity about the situation, I do not want to rush and potentially misinform you. Please can I ask for patience following any announcement to enable the staff at Exwick Heights to prepare our response properly. Our priority will be our community's well-being and safety and so we want to thoroughly review any guidance received before we contact you. If the announcement is made on Sunday, I hope to be able to share plans before the end of the week. Thank you for your understanding regarding this.

Our school continues to be partially open, providing childcare for the children of key workers and vulnerable children in these challenging times. The school has also made over 400 telephone calls to families to keep in touch and there is a video of many members of staff due to be shared on Wonde in the coming week (I'm really looking forward to seeing this!)

I know that the children are keen to hear directly from the staff here at school. However, we have been unable to action this for every child for a variety of reasons. Many of our teachers are in school working on a daily basis as well as managing the online learning platform (whilst writing the children's annual school reports) so I have been reluctant to direct them to take on more work at this time. With between 25 and 30 children in each class, telephoning each individual pupil would take a considerable amount of time. I also have to be very conscious that many of our teachers have family members at home with them at the moment, which could make posting a video or telephoning pupils far more challenging! To protect each family's contact information, we are only making contact using school phones to enable us to keep your personal information secure. This means that only the staff in school, are able to call - which is a challenge as they are also providing child care for key worker children and those considered to be vulnerable.

Our main office at school is open on a daily basis though and we are responding to all calls and emails through the school website, so please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Child Care: 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.

Keeping Safe Online: The coronavirus lockdown has meant that many children are likely to be spending more time online while at home. Online games can be a great way for them to keep busy and stay in touch with friends and family but it is so important that they are able to play safely. Unfortunately, many games are open to misuse and it is possible for external individuals to contact players. Please familiarise yourself with any settings for these games and ensure that you closely supervise. Remember, other players may not be who they claim to be! There is some fantastic advice for parents regarding online safety on the NSPCC website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/> which I heartily recommend. The advice covers a wide range of topics and is very well written.

Please can I also ask that parents and carers check the age recommendations for all games, apps, live streaming and social media and follow the recommendations to protect our children.

- WhatsApp users need to be 16 or over. Nearly all other social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age to access and use their services. This includes Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype.
- Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on YouTube, users need to be 13 years old or older to have their own YouTube account.
- Tik Tok and other live streaming accounts also require users to be at least 13 years old.

Finally, there is a website called NetAware where parents can very quickly search for an app/game and it tells them about it and the age rating. The site is: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

I hope that this information is useful.

Resources to Support Mental Health and Wellbeing The Anna Freud Centre has published a range of resources to help support the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people, school staff and parents. There are three toolkits altogether but one in particular is the most useful to parents.

You can find this toolkit by clicking on this link:

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/coronavirus-resources-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing-toolkit-1/>

Resources for Mental Health and Wellbeing includes:

- a booklet to support schools
- videos to provide practical guidance and tips to schools, parents and carers about coronavirus (COVID-19) and mental health
- activities to ease anxiety that can be done at school or at home and other helpful advice, helplines and resources for adults and children.

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 you all on the other side of this!

Best wishes,



Mrs C Neal

Headteacher

Term Dates: Academic year September 2020 – August 2021

Friday 4th Sept 2020	Non pupil day/teaching and admin staff only
Monday 7th Sept 2020	Non pupil day/teaching and admin staff only
Tues 8th Sept 2020	Children return to school
Mon 26th - Fri 30th Oct inclusive	Half Term
Mon 2nd Nov 2020	Staff and children return
Thurs 17th Dec	Last day of term
Fri 18th Dec 2020 – Fri 31st Dec 2020	Christmas holiday
Mon 4th Jan 2021	Non pupil day
Tues 5th Jan 2021	Children return to school
Monday 15th - Friday 19th Feb 2021	Half term
Monday 21st Feb 2021	Staff and children return to school
Thursday 1st Apr 2021	Last day of term
Friday 2nd - Friday 16th Apr 2021	Easter holiday
Mon 19th Apr 2021	Non pupil day
Tuesday 20th Apr 2021	Children return to school
Mon 3rd May 2021	Bank holiday
Tues 4th May 2021	Return to school after bank holiday weekend
Mon 31st May – Fri 4th June 2021	Half term
Mon 7th June 2021	Non pupil day
Tues 8th June 2021	Children return to school
Thurs 22nd July	Last day of term for children and staff
Fri 23rd July 2021	Occasional day
Mon 26th July 2021	Summer holiday begins

