

EXWICK HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Easter Holiday– April 23rd 2020

Website: www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Dear Parents & Carers

I hope you are all safe and well? It is hard to believe that we are already in the latter stages of April, although the continuing beautiful weather is a clear sign!

Our school continues to be partially open, providing childcare for the children of key 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.

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 as a school when the lockdown is eased. Please do not feel anxious about this – we are all living in exceptional times!

I have received a small number of requests to arrange online meetings for children on social media to allow them to socialise. I'm afraid I am unable to action this as we are unable to ensure that the children are adequately protected from risk during an online meeting. I realise that all children are missing their friends during this period. Please reassure them that the situation we are currently in is temporary and they be reunited with their school mates as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

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 share the attached pamphlet, which was attached to the email with this newsletter. The pamphlet has been 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.

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. Please can anyone who should have access to this scheme but has not received their voucher contact school to inform us? I am aware from some of our parents and the media that the scheme has had teething problems resulting in delays for some families. I do not want anyone to be left in difficulties because of this. 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.

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 you all on the other side of this!

Best wishes,

Mrs C Neal
Headteacher