

EXWICK HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Autumn Term – September 4th 2020

Website: www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk

Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to warmly welcome you all to the start of another academic year here at Exwick Heights and a special welcome to any new families who are receiving our school newsletter for the first time! I hope you have all enjoyed a wonderful summer with your children.

Here at Exwick Heights, we are really looking forward to welcoming all of our children back to school. We would like to begin by reassuring you that we will take every step in our power to ensure that our school is as safe as possible. We will follow Government guidance whilst ensuring that our school is as familiar, and friendly, to our children as possible.

We know the start of term can be quite daunting (especially for parents and carers), and I am aware that because of the procedures for arrival and pick up here at school (outlined in the letter entitled 'Information for September 2020 which has again been attached to this email for information) many of our parents will be unable to come onto the school site as usual. As a result of these restrictions (which I hope we will be able to ease before very long) please do not hesitate to call or email the school to pass any messages or concerns. There is more information relating to this on the next page of this letter. I'm afraid we will be unable to take messages at the school gate as we need to prioritise the children at drop off and collection times.

Our teaching team will focus on helping your child to quickly settle into school. We recognise that every child will have had very different experiences throughout the last six months, and so we will need to support them with adjusting to the routine of school life once more. We will be utilising a recovery curriculum initially. A Recovery Curriculum is a way for schools to help children come back into school life, acknowledging the different experiences the children have had. We want all of our children to be happy, feel safe and able to be engaged in their learning.

If you have any questions about any aspect of school life, please don't hesitate to make contact with us!

Help Our School to stay Covid Safe:

We have a number of pupils and staff who, up until a few weeks ago, had been shielding since March as a result of underlying health conditions. Whilst we understand from the Office of National Statistics that children of all ages are at extremely low risk of becoming ill from the virus, it is important that we do not become complacent, particularly as there will be a significant number within our community who are more vulnerable to the impact of Covid 19. It is important that we keep our whole school community as safe as possible. Please ensure that you, and the individuals that you mix with, follow current Government guidance at all times to keep both yourself and others safe.

Here at school, we have taken steps to minimise cross contamination. Our risk assessment has been checked and approved by Devon Health and Safety and is reviewed each week to ensure that it is always current and appropriate.

Steps taken to ensure safety include:

- No mixing of pupils in different year groups whilst attending school. Playtimes will be staggered and each year group will have a dedicated play area to minimise cross contamination. Play areas will only change after a weekend break, leaving a clear minimum gap of 70 hours between use by another year group and will be cleaned after each use
- A one-way system for movement around the school site
- A requirement that anyone who may be unwell stays at home
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding this.

Messages:

As parents and carers will be unable to go into classrooms to speak to school staff, we ask that any urgent message for the teacher (for instance, if your child is concerned about any aspect of school, or if you wish to inform the teacher about something which may impact) are emailed to the school admin address (admin@exwickheights.devon.sch.uk) by 8am to ensure that we are able to forward them directly to the teacher before their class arrives. The teacher will be unable to respond to these emails prior to the start of the school day but please be reassured that they will receive it and be able to act upon it. After 8am, the school telephone number may be used but if your message is not urgent, we ask that the email address is used to ensure that the switchboard is not inundated with calls!

The school Senior Leadership Team will be outside to meet and greet children daily, but I am afraid that they will not be able to engage in conversation with parents and carers at this time as their priority will need to be on the children. This will also help to minimise the number of face to face contacts our senior staff have. Please respect these procedures to enable us to keep our community as safe as possible.

Gathering:

The latest guidance from the government (published on the 24th of August 2020) is clear that no one should socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households. It is important that we are all aware of this when travelling to and from school. If you arrive at school early, please do not gather at our school gate. We will ask anyone waiting in this area prior to the start of the school day to move on until it is time for the children to enter the school. With such a large school, it is really important that this is followed by everyone. It is inevitable that the area around the school will be busy and so we ask that everyone completes the school drop off swiftly. We understand that the opportunity to chat to other parents and carers is enjoyable for you all but this will need to be away from the school site to enable our children to attend safely. We are only permitting the parents and carer of children from Nursery up to Year 2 on site in the mornings and the parents and carers of children from Nursery to Year 3 on site in the afternoons (please see attached Information about September 2020 for more information). Our KS2 children will need to enter the school site independently. Staff will always be stood on each gate to ensure that children come straight into school safely and remain on the school site.

Historically, some of our older pupils have arrived at the school gates very early to socialise with their friends prior to the school day. This inevitably leads to congestion and so we need to ask parents and carers to explain to their children that this is not safe currently, to ensure that they are not waiting prior to 8.30am. We recognise that the new arrangements are far from ideal but we have had to put them into place to protect our school. The only alternative to this would be to further stagger arrival and departure times but we recognise that this is extremely difficult for our families, impacting on

working hours and on parents of more than one child within our school and so we are reluctant to do this anymore than we already have, if at all possible.

Dismissal:

Our dismissal procedures at the end of the working day will take longer initially as we ensure that each child leaves safely. Please be reassured that it will become quicker as staff, parents and children become more familiar with the new routines!

If you are the parent or carer of an older pupil and would like to meet them to walk home, please consider carefully where you will meet your child. We need to ensure the area around the school gates and Exwick Lane are not obstructed by people waiting. Thank you for your support with this!

Belongings:

Where possible, we ask that children only bring their plastic water bottle (only containing water, fizzy drinks, flavoured water and squash are not permitted), their book bag and, if appropriate, packed lunches to school. PE kit should come into school on the first day of term and then remain in school (pupils in our Reception Year will not need a PE kit initially). However, we understand that occasionally, a child may need to bring in other items for after school. If this is unavoidable, bags for this purpose will be stored externally and will not be permitted in the classroom. We understand that children like to have a 'school bag', but this is not part of our school uniform and we strongly encourage parents and carers not to send a school bag into school during the pandemic, if at all possible. Thank you for your support with this.

Ventilation: We will have our classroom doors and windows open at all times to ensure that each classroom is well ventilated. With the weather being so variable at the moment, I would recommend that layers are considered to ensure that your child remains comfortable when at school. A coat should be sent to school every day too – the weather here in Exwick can be notorious for suddenly pouring with rain at the end of the school day!

Disabled Parking: Please contact the school if you require disabled access, to enable our team to support you whilst protecting those attending.

Term Dates for 2020/21: These are always available on our school website <https://www.exwickheights.devon.sch.uk/diary-dates> and will also be printed on subsequent newsletters as the year progresses.

Parent Curriculum Plans: Our year group teams of staff are drawing up this term's Curriculum Plans and they will be with you shortly. These plans will enable you to have a brief overview of what your child will be learning across the autumn term and help to keep you informed with regard to how you might support them at home. The school's blog provides a more detailed breakdown of the curriculum each week and is updated every Friday (barring any technical issues) to share information about what our year groups have been learning. The blog (which can be accessed on the school website) is a super way to keep yourself informed about exactly what your child has been up to at school and is very effective at encouraging children to share more with you at home.

School Dinners: Our school dinner's will look a little different as they will be delivered to each classroom directly, negating the need for children to mix with other year groups in our canteen. As a

result, our menu looks a little different to usual. Please find it attached to this newsletter. The school meal cost is £2.50. Dinner tickets are sold via the schoolgateway app, which you will need to register with if you have not used it before. It is a free app which is available from app stores on tablets and smart phones. It can be used to book and pay for a wide range of school events, including extra-curricular clubs and school dinners. Please contact the school office if you have any difficulty accessing it.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to Universal Free School meals, and so do not need to pay for their school meals. However, parents/carers will still need to pre-order their school meal using the School Gateway app. KS2 pupils (Years 3 to 6) will need to pre-order and pay for school meals unless entitled to Free School Meals. If you are in receipt of any of the following, you can apply for Free School Meal entitlement:

Qualifying benefits:

- 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.

Lunches and Allergies: Please can I remind parents that we have a number of children within our school with severe allergies. As a result, we ask all parents and carers to ensure that their child's packed lunch or snack does not contain nuts. A severe allergic reaction can be triggered by air contaminated with tiny particles from a food containing nuts and so it is vital that we are all aware and adhere to this. Thank you for your support.

Reception Induction Visits: I have received a few queries from parents asking if school uniform is needed during our three Reception induction visits. The children should wear their uniform to familiarise themselves with the new routine for school. Thank you to those parents who have contacted us to ask this question – I hope this reassures you that we always respond to any query!

Parking around the school area:

Parking around our site is extremely challenging. Please ensure you allow time to park/stop considerately and where possible, park away from the school. I'm sure you will be aware of the need to

avoid blocking drives or parking on double yellow lines or crossing points. The raised crossing at the front of the school must be kept clear, as parking either side of it on the double yellow lines **puts our pupils in danger** they cannot be seen by car drivers coming up the hill. There is a 20mph speed limit around the school and the area directly in front of the main school gates is a 'One Way' system which is a '**Strictly No Parking**' zone. Please help us to develop a positive relationship with our neighbours by parking considerately and allowing time to find a suitable parking space (this may well involve walking the last part of your journey to school).

Phew! I realise that this is a huge amount to remember but if we work together, I am confident that we will be able to ensure that our school run is as smoothly as possible. Thank you for your help with this.

Mrs C. Neal
Headteacher

Term Dates Academic Year 2020/21

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