

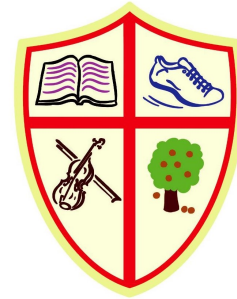
WESTBURY-ON-SEVERN C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

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**Westbury-on-Severn
CE Primary School**

Wednesday 10th June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I do hope that this letter finds you all safe and well.

As you will be aware, we have now, after an enormous amount of juggling, staff redeployment and classroom organisation, opened the school to some children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. I say 'some' children as not all Reception and Year 1 children have returned. However, I am pleased to say that all the Year 6 children have come back and have settled back exceptionally well. We have also remained open to a group of children; whose parents are critical workers. This group fluctuates from 4 to 11 children.

The anticipated challenges of reopening school within the constraints of Government guidance around social distancing, much reduced class sizes (or 'bubble' sizes), overall size of the school and keeping to meticulous risk assessments that have been written, have all been realised! But, in true Westbury fashion, we have tried our hardest to overcome these challenges with a smile and enormous amounts of problem solving!

From our point of view and assessment of the first week, procedures we have put in place have worked as well as they could. When I wrote to you before, I made it clear that certain expectations could not be guaranteed. However, the children have been amazing at keeping themselves within their own 'bubble' with their key adults. Generally, they don't move from their room unless they are having a PE session outdoors or having lunch outdoors. We try to get outside as much as possible as it is much better for the children. During lunch time, the children use the open spaces on the field and, whilst they can see each other and say hello, they do not mix between their bubbles. Each bubble has its own piece of trim-trail equipment to use – in keeping with guidance – so again, the children don't use each other's. It would be fair to say that the older children are able to adhere much more to the 2m distancing rule than the younger children; which was expected. However, they are always within their own bubble.

Despite everyone's nervousness about this new approach, we have had no tears in school, we have had lots of smiles and – unsurprisingly – plenty of tired yawning by about 2pm! I want to express my thanks to you all for the way you have supported the drop-off and pick-up arrangements. You have made it so ordered and painless!

So, what next? Well, we have been anticipating some further instruction from the Government around the wider reopening of schools to more year groups. Yesterday however, The Secretary of State for Education, Mr. Gavin Williamson, recognised that this would not, in the majority of cases, be a practical next step. I have to agree. Currently, we have over a third of the school back with us. This is wonderful, but has caused significant logistical problems, such as space and human deployment. Our biggest group at the moment, and the priority for supporting, is the bubble containing the children of critical workers. Due to the nature of the work patterns, this is a fluid group which is growing. Unfortunately, no mention has been made of reducing social distancing and we are still bound by these guideline, as well as many, many others. As a result, we will not be opening to any other year group.

It is important to also note that the risk assessments that have been written for school, make it clear that we cannot totally eradicate risk of COVID-19 in our setting, only reduce it as much as possible. Were we to welcome more year groups back whilst the current lockdown regulations are in place, it would not only invalidate the school's risk assessment, but we would be creating more risk rather than lowering existing risks. I hope that makes sense.

I know that for many, the thought of children missing more face-to-face learning is disappointing and difficult, but I do



thank you for your resilience in these difficult times. Thank you too, for the messages of support and encouragement that you have sent in. We are deeply unhappy at the present situation but are doing as much as we possibly can to make things work for as many children and families as we can.

I want to reiterate again my gratitude to you for all the amazing ways you are supporting the home-learning tasks that are being set. But, for your own mental well-being and the mental well-being of your children, when you have had enough – stop! Be parents first. You know what makes your child tick and what battles to have. If home-learning is a challenge today, don't fight a losing war. You will win it tomorrow! I say this with all the love and respect for education and my profession, but I am a father too, with two children who have better days than others. Through the many phone calls I have had with parents, there have been stories of great opportunities that children have had in gardening or building something together, cooking or making a sandwich. These are valid life-lessons and worthy of as much praise as doing Khan Academy! Baking and cooking are so important. I learnt my baking skills from watching and helping my mother on Sunday afternoons and some DIY skills from being with my Dad in the garage growing up (though I wish I had paid more attention to him!). You are all doing a great job.

I was inspired by a conversation with a parent yesterday, to spend some time in my garden just listening to the sounds and birds. I needed it! Sometimes the best learning takes place when you are still and quiet; you can hear your thoughts better and in my experience, process better. It is certainly something we are encouraging in school. I am so grateful to Mrs Noad, who is working flat out with a large group of pupils (no more than 15 though), for the mindfulness work she is doing and has shared with us all.

So, I thought I would finish this letter by sharing a beautiful poem by William Henry Davies:

What is this life if full of care
We have no time to stand and stare?
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep, or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

William Henry Davies 1871 – 1940

Thank you all for what you are doing at home. Our thoughts, prayers and love are with you all.

With warmest wishes,



David Crunkhurn
Headteacher

