



Stockbridge

Primary and Pre-school



Newsletter 16

7 January 2021

Well that was a strange start to the term!

Monday morning, I walked to the gate, delighted to see so many smiley children who cheered at being back at school and greeted me with "I can't wait to be back at school," and "I love school" so it seemed the cruelest letter I've ever had to write on the evening of the very same day to close the school.

This newsletter comes to you a day early this week, the first back in 2021 and only 6 days after I wished friends and family a better year than 2020 but it definitely feels like a hollow wish at the moment.

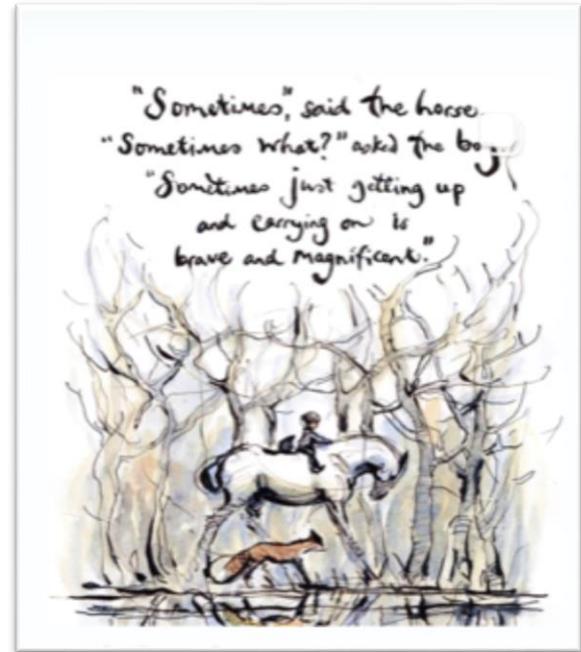
I've had a few communications about the decisions behind who comes into school which this letter should help to explain.

Despite the rocky start to term, I am blown away by the support, kind messages and positive approach to the situation we find ourselves in currently with lockdown 3, which will leave us in lockdown with a split school yet again, until at least February half term.

Once again, staff have been superb and I am so honored to lead a great team. Within 30 mins of the Government's announcement on Monday, every single member of staff joined a zoom call so that we could roll out plans Miss Tregunna and I had begun earlier in the day. If you had nerves about sending your child back into school, I can assure you that staff felt the same, if not more vulnerable but have absolutely rallied to ensure school remains viable whether it's home learning or in school provision.

The next 6 weeks will be challenging for us all but rest assured, we're together every step of the way.

Emma Jefferies
Headteacher



Coming Up!

There is precious little in the diary at the moment but next week, we are offering an opportunity to come and swap books and pick up learning resources for every child learning at home.

	Monday 11 th	Tuesday 12 th
Surnames A - G	9.30am - 10.30am	2.30pm - 3.30pm
Surnames H - O	10.45am - 12noon	1.15pm - 2.15pm
Surnames P - Z	1.15pm - 2.30pm	10.45am - 12noon

Other dates in the wider term:

w/b Mon 11 th	08:00	Office system is being switched over - this may lead to temporary challenges but we're assured these will be overcome within a day or two! Please bear with us.
Tues 9 th Feb	16:00	Parent's evening - remotely again
Wed 10 th Feb	16:00	Parent's evening - remotely again
Fri 12 th Feb	15:30	End of Spring term 1
FEBRUARY HALF TERM 13 th - 21 st Feb		
Mon 22 nd Feb	All day	INSET - no children in school

Releasing work on GC the night before

Many of you have asked if we can release work on GC the night before it's due as you have multiple children to prepare for and this helps you to be organised. As of Monday - we will! Please try to not let the children actually start until after 8.45am though as teachers may want to add a few bits or tweak something at the last minute.

What's it like in school & who's here?

I really appreciated communication from a parent in the week about the basis on which children would be able to attend school and why and I am acutely aware of the pressures on families whose children have to remain at home.

In this lockdown, the Government have given a wider spectrum of key workers who can access school provision as well as a broader definition of vulnerable children we might also provide a school place for. It does mean that by Monday, we are expecting 65 children back in school and about 6 or 7 in pre-school. As a result of the significant numbers back in school, all teachers are in, teaching their own classes. This has enabled us to keep bubbles at roughly the same size as the small groups we were required to provide for in the summer term. The Government this time has not limited bubble size in any way but it seems to act against the spirit and purpose of lockdown if we have bubbles of 20+!

On 1st January, the Government updated & broadened the critical worker list – in our school, there are 59 children who fall into the critical worker category. We are required to provide a place for key worker children, if requested by the parent, even if there is another adult at home, although clearly, we are not encouraging this.

In addition, they asked schools to make places available to vulnerable children and those with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) which are linked to Special Educational Needs, as well as those on the path to receiving an EHCP. In our school this applies to 7 children, which is significantly above the national average for our size school.

In a broadening of the criteria, we are also required to offer places to other categories of potentially vulnerable children; much of this is left to the knowledge and discretion of the Headteacher and leadership team; in our school this applies, for varying reasons, to 25 children. It is the right of both us as the school and the families involved, that we do not divulge reasons for vulnerability to the wider school; this is inappropriate and unnecessary.

In culmination, the sum of all children in these groups makes 65% of our school population. On Monday 11th we will have 48% of our school population in school.

Why are children staying in school regardless of their parent's shift pattern?

Each time we lockdown, we learn a little more about the best way to provide an education in these strange times and what is best for the children and the staff; I have a duty of care for both! The inconsistency of children doing some days and not others, 2 days one week, 1 and a half days another, 5 days another almost broke the teachers in the summer term as they had a complex mix that changed every day of who and what they were providing learning for.

We also learnt that a 'key worker bubble' of children from 3 or 4 year groups was almost impossible to provide anything of quality for as well as providing good quality home learning.

Risks of infection and contamination were also higher as children were also looked after by child minders, other family members and very shattered parents who had, in many cases, been frontline carers and NHS staff – we have 14 children of nurses, doctors and consultants in school let alone the high number of army and school staff who are working in logistics, vaccine roll out and frontline provision in other schools.

This is a localised decision to best support the community as a whole. It maintains bubbles of small numbers and will mean that when we return after February half term (I am crossing my fingers for this), which isn't a 14 day clear break, if your child has been at home, they won't need to rejoin children who've been mixing with other year groups and bubbles.

What's my biggest concern?

I know that the children in school, despite the mixing with others in their bubble, are as safe as we can make it.

I know that the children at home, despite the challenges home learning brings, are as safe as you can make them.

My biggest concern is for my staff. I don't think I've ever written that before but they are under huge pressure from society, to be in school, not get ill, protect their families, deliver high quality home learning that meets the many demands families have as well as deliver high quality learning in school. They are all extremely diligent. They worked so hard last term to catch children up, meet the emotional and social needs of children who had been out of school for so long. They feel so worried they are going to let anyone down, most of all, your child.

In the previous lockdown, we were able to give them 2 ½ weeks between being in school so that if they got COVID, they had a break. We can't do that this time with the number in school. They too make sacrifices on a daily basis to be in school.

A few of us follow twitter avidly and we've even taken to not checking it as it's so vitriolic.

You have been so kind in your words, actions and support and I am forever grateful. Thank you. Please bear with us in the weeks to come, we really are doing our very best.

Teachers will be online checking work and able to respond to messages between 8.15am and 5pm.
Support staff and teachers are all working together to monitor google classroom.