

Headteacher: Mr D Childs

8th January 2021

Dear Parents,

Whilst it has not been the first week of term that any of us were expecting, there is still so much to celebrate and be extremely proud of.

Over the past two weeks, we have all, as a whole school community, been left reeling from a number of government announcements and press conferences. We now enter a longer period of national lockdown due to the extremely high number of daily infections of Covid-19, as well as the extremely high number of daily deaths. As a result, all schools across the country have moved to remote learning for the majority of their children in order to support the incredible efforts of the NHS and other critical workers across the country.

From the point of view of education, we have been required to adapt the way the education is provided to children. Like many schools in Kent, our term began on 30th December 2020. The efforts that have been made by the entire staff team have been nothing short of miraculous. They have worked non-stop since the 30th December to adjust plans and resources, record videos, alter classrooms, and a thousand other jobs that you may not all be aware of. Around the school today, I can tell you that there is a mixture of both pride and exhaustion. We have given it our very best because that is exactly what our children deserve.

As a school, we have reflected, adapted and learnt a great deal from this week. We place great emphasis on lifelong learning in our school. If we are to expect our children to learn in the best possible way, we must be great learners ourselves. Your feedback has been invaluable to us and has allowed us to identify improvements to our school provision. We know that we may not always be able to provide what every family would ideally like, but we always take the time to listen and discuss feedback given to us.

Over the past week, we have been sent so many messages of appreciation and I would like to thank you all for taking the time to send these to staff. I have seen so many beaming smiles and, on occasion tears, from our staff team at the heart-felt messages that have been sent. I know that you will all be incredibly busy and also concerned with the local and national landscape so to take the time out of your day to send messages of support and kindness really is very much appreciated by the entire staff team.

It is also very important that we extend our appreciation to all of you for the incredible way that you have all adapted this week. Our engagement with remote learning is extremely strong at the moment with some classes reporting that they have had every single child engaged with their learning, whether it be at home or in school. The addition of video sessions seem to have provided an excellent tool to support children and parents in remote learning. We understand that preparing and organising sessions at home is no easy task so would like to thank you all for your excellent levels of patience and engagement throughout the week. A few of our systems have needed some tweaking and improvements, and the level of understanding from our parents with this has been exceptional.

I have received several messages from parents this week along the lines of 'we are all in this together', and this is something that all of our staff have commented upon this week. At a time of great uncertainty and worry for us all, we continue to work together to create a united approach to support our Ryarsh family. It will continue to be a difficult few weeks ahead, of that I have no question, but what I cannot question is the unwavering determination and support from everyone in our Ryarsh family to both keep our children and community safe and to continue to support every child's education as best we can.

Finally, before I provide additional information to you, I must express to you how proud of our children I continue to be. Yet again, they have demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination. Irrespective of where the children's learning is taking place, they continue to show great levels of engagement and independence. These little wonders of our Ryarsh family are the biggest source of motivation and inspiration to us all. This week, I spent an afternoon with our year 6 children and it reminded me just how privileged we are to get to spend time with these children and to be part of their journey through life.

The following part of the weekly letter is to provide you with some further information:

Symptom-free COVID-19 testing for key workers and their families

Kent County Council has launched a symptom-free testing scheme for key workers and their families across the County from 4 January 2021. The test uses a lateral flow device and can detect in 30 minutes whether an individual has the COVID-19 virus. Any key worker and members of their family can book a test. Further test centres will be coming online as the scheme is rolled out.

To book a test, please follow this link: <https://kcc.healthit.org.uk/covbook/home>

COVID-19 - Safety Update

Presently, we do not have any plans on adjusting the morning and afternoon timings and routines. We will continue to monitor this, and may choose to make changes if we have any concerns about social distancing.

Google Classroom

I am pleased to let you all know that the technical issue with submitting assignments seems to have been fixed. Next week, you should all have much greater success in uploading your child's work and 'handing in' assignments to the class teacher.

We will also be making some minor changes with the layout of the google classroom pages. We are mindful that, over the next few weeks, many more resources will be added. To prevent the pages from becoming overwhelming to navigate, we will begin to delete resources from 2020 and archive those from the start of the term. We hope that this will continue to make the pages more user-friendly for our parents.

I hope that you all take some time this weekend to reflect on your own personal successes this week. Thank you once again for everything you are doing to help keep our community safe and our children learning. If I could give a headteacher award to you all, I would!

Stay safe,

Mr Childs and the rest of the team at Ryarsh Primary School