

Headteacher: Mr D Childs

29th January 2021

Dear Parents,

Let's start the letter by just getting out in the open what we all know - life is challenging at the moment. No matter what we do to keep ourselves smiling and to keep everything as positive as possible, we must recognise the difficult times. For almost a month, we have been unable to live our lives as we would like. Trying to balance work commitments, our children's education and keeping safe during the global pandemic is hard. It will be more important than ever to make sure we all look out for each other and take the time to listen and support wherever we can. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking into further ways to help our families through this difficult period we find ourselves in.

Covid-19 Update

On Wednesday 27th January, the Prime Minister announced that it will not be possible to resume face-to-face learning immediately after the February half-term and instead hopes it will be safe to commence the re-opening of schools and colleges from Monday 8th March. This is in response to the national public health data and pressure on NHS capacity.

If the Government achieves its target of vaccinating everyone in the four most vulnerable groups with their first dose by 15th February then those groups will have developed immunity from the virus around three weeks later, that is by 8th March. It is for this reason that we hope it will therefore be safe to commence the reopening of schools from Monday 8th March.

Education settings, as well as students, parents and carers will be given at least two weeks' notice to prepare for a return to face-to-face education.

Schools and colleges will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers after February half-term, as they are now.

The government will also continue to provide support for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals through the national voucher scheme or lunch parcels to those learning at home during term time next half-term. Support will also be available during the half-term holiday for vulnerable families through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

Education attendance restrictions are to be reviewed again in mid-February when the Government will look at when more pupils and students can be brought back into schools and further education.

The Ryarsh Spirit

We really enjoyed our Burns Night celebrations this week and it was great to see so many of our children and families engaged with this celebration. Today, we have also been enjoying 'screen free Friday' to ease the pressure on our children and families at the moment, and really allow us to focus on supporting children's mental health and wellbeing.

Next Friday afternoon (5th February) will be the 'Ryarsh Masterchef Challenge'. During this afternoon, we will be asking all of our children across the school to complete a fun food challenge. Each class will be posting the ingredients and equipment that you will need in preparation for the event so you will know in good time what you will require, but the recipe will remain top secret until Friday afternoon! At this time, a video will be released of a staff member showing the children how to create the recipe. This should mean that we have our children making something delicious all at the same time. The recipes we are using have been carefully considered so they are not too complex.

Online Safety

This week, we have been reviewing our risk assessment for remote learning and I would like to draw your attention to the following points, highlighted by the local authority, in regards to 'live' sessions (on zoom or any other platform).

Children should be encouraged to access the live stream from a shared/communal space or room with an open door and/or when appropriately supervised by a parent/carer or another appropriate adult. They should also be dressed appropriately and behave as they would in the classroom.

During 'live' sessions, we generally expect the children to be on mute with the video function also off. This is to make sure that the children can maintain a high level of focus and concentration on the teacher's explanation and it also provides an additional safety measure in terms of safeguarding. There will be occasions where children may be asked to unmute themselves or to have their video on and this will always be directed by the class teacher.

Also, please remember that we may be unable to admit anyone to the room that we cannot identify. During my assembly last Friday, I was still not able to admit a small number of people as I could not identify who they were. This will also be the case with zoom lessons so it is important that you or your child can be identified when they enter the waiting room. We will need to see the full name of either the parent or child to admit them into the room.

Remote Learning Review

Engagement with remote learning continues to be really high and our new tracking system to follow children's engagement show that in some lessons throughout the school we have 100% of the class engaged in their learning.

There are a small number of enhancements that we will be making to our remote learning provision for next week, based on both the feedback from the staff team and parents. Thank you once again for your ongoing feedback.

Firstly, teachers will be hosting one live afternoon session next week to help engage children further in their foundation subjects. Details of this will be posted on the google classroom page. Like our other 'live' lessons, they will also be recorded so that they can be used at a different time that may suit our families better. Please provide the class teachers with feedback on this as we want to make sure that we focus our energy on efforts that will have the greatest impact on our children and families.

We will also be providing the children with the opportunity for one or two social zoom calls per week. We want to make sure that our children stay well connected with each other over the next few weeks. This is completely optional. Details will be posted on the google classroom page for each class.

At the start of each maths lesson, we will be asking the children to complete a short retrieval activity, before the lesson formally starts. Many of our classes are already doing this. As a staff, we have looked at research this week on what a powerful tool this can be in supporting children's learning, regardless of where the learning is taking place as it helps build connections in children's minds and makes them more fluent and confident. In school, using a retrieval activity would be the way our lessons usually begin and we have found that it can be a really useful activity for the children to complete whilst waiting for everyone to join the zoom call and the lesson to begin. It will be a short quiz type of activity and will be based on what the children have already been taught. This will be introduced in years 1-6. Details of the quiz will be posted as part of the lesson resources on the google classroom pages for each class.

Finally, I want to thank you all for continuing to use the assignment function on google classrooms. This has really helped our teachers to track engagement levels with more efficiently and has provided more time for planning and feedback, helping us to introduce the improvements above. Next week, we will still be posting comments on the assignments submitted but will not be using the 'return' function as this seems to put the assignment back on your 'to do' list, making it harder for parents to keep track on the assignments that have been submitted.

#RyarshChallenge

It was brilliant to see some of our families complete last week's Ryarsh challenge, although it was quite a messy challenge!

We are very excited to announce our challenge this week, which is very different to the previous week. The Ryarsh challenge next week will be a **photography challenge**. Next week is Children's Mental Health Week. This year's theme is Express Yourself.

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas, through creativity. It's important to remember that being able to express yourself is not about being the best at something or putting on a performance for others. It is about finding a way to show who you are, and how you see the world, that can help you feel good about yourself.

We would like our children to find a way to express themselves through photography. Some examples of this could be where they show their love and passion for something in a photograph. It could be something in the natural world around them that captivates them; the possibilities are endless!

To submit a photograph to us, we have actually created an online photograph gallery for you to upload your photographs using our google classroom platform. To do this, please click on the link below:

<https://classroom.google.com/c/MjQ3NTAwNDgxMTgx?cjc=rlpui7v>

We would like to print these photographs and possibly create a whole school display inside our school.

If you would like to, you can also post your submissions online using twitter. Please don't forget to tag us by using @ryarshprimary.

If you would like a more private way to submit the photographs, please email the class teacher. We will not use these images for our display unless you ask us to.

Have the best weekend possible,

Daniel Childs and the team at Ryarsh Primary School