



Headteacher: Mrs Lindsay Robertson BA (Hons) NPQH

28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wanted to write to you in response to the announcement by the Prime Minister yesterday and also about remote learning in general.

We were delighted as a school staff when yesterday our Prime Minister, Mr Johnson, announced that schools may start to return from the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This was a welcome piece of information as we can't wait to have all of the children back in school. Once further information and re-opening guidance is received, I will let you know so that you are always informed. However, I think we need to be cautious, as a return to school depends on infection rates dropping which at the present time doesn't seem to be happening with a staggeringly high death rate. Hopefully if we keep doing what we are doing then we will get back to some sort of normality soon and we send our condolences to those who have been affected.

In relation to remote learning, I wanted to reassure you that we are following the government guidance and are setting work in line with that guidance. This guidance can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). When we received the guidance we considered the options open to us in relation to how we set remote learning tasks. We didn't want to have children on timetabled remote learning 'live lessons' as this would have limited your ability to structure your own day as children would need to be seen on these lessons in person at the allotted times. We are aware that a lot of you have small children, relatives to look after and a whole host of other commitments, therefore, by not expecting children to 'appear live' on screen you can control where and when the children complete the tasks across the day. All we ask is that the children are logged on by 9.15am as we have a duty of care to complete welfare checks for safeguarding purposes. 9.15am is far later than the children would have needed to be up and ready for school normally; therefore by structuring learning in this way, we've given you more flexibility in your daily routine. The hours of work that the children are set are also far less than they would all do across a normal school day where they would be working from 8.50-10.40am, 11-12pm and 1-3.15pm regardless of the key stage that they are in.

We do appreciate it is hard for you all with remote learning and this is less than an ideal situation for everyone. The concerns that you are raising with us are the same as are being raised across the country. Please believe that our staff are working very hard in school to provide lessons and support to yourselves and your children with their learning. I have purposefully organised staff so there is always someone on hand if you need advice or support. Please can I ask that if you have any issues with the staffing of remote learning that you direct concerns to myself and not address them through social media as this is upsetting to the staff team. This situation isn't their fault and the guidance has come from government. They have a duty of care to educate and support our children and they are going about their tasks as best they can given the global pandemic that we are living with. However, as the numbers of those sadly dying are so high, we can only work with the guidance and rules that we are given, which are new to us too, and we are trying our very best.

I am also aware of speculation surrounding the number of children who are in school. We have under half of the normal number of children in with us at the moment. The children who are in are made up of the

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whole of nursery (currently 20 -who are allowed to attend under statutory guidance) as well as 62 children who are classified as being vulnerable; as well as key worker children and those with an EHCP. The advice we need to follow is to only have children in school who fall under these categories. We have a far higher percentage of children attending than many other schools and we have done this to help families as much as we can where reasons for attendance fall under the categories above. I know that many of you will be disappointed not to have the children attending and this is why we organised our remote learning offer to be as flexible as we can so that we know the children are registered and safe each morning and that you can then log on and complete activities cross the day- adding breaks and learning around your commitments. As long as all tasks are completed across each day that's fine with us. Just be aware of staff's working hours- so please don't make it too late as staff enjoy commenting on the work completed and have a responsibility to do so! Staff don't like having to make home visits and welfare calls but they become necessary where we don't have engagement.

I am also aware that there are concerns about the mental health of children being significantly affected by this lockdown. I believe that this is why remote learning expectations have been structured in the way they have by the government to try to maintain some sense of routine for the children and so they have regular contact with staff. Again, please take breaks in between tasks to go for socially distanced walks and fresh air so that you all get a break from the house. This is allowed under lock down rules and we strongly encourage it.

Next week is Mental Health Week across the country and staff will be setting tasks and activities to support the children in maintaining health and well-being. We believe that the children will enjoy completing these lessons. Mrs Beavis and Miss Mather have worked very hard to make sure that the children focus on what it means to be mentally healthy and resilient so we can't wait to see the work that is shared with us. I am hoping that these lessons will support the children with being resilient in these difficult times.

As always, please work with us to support the children. You are all doing brilliantly and deserve so much credit for all you are achieving! We know it isn't easy and you are all rising to the challenge. The response to home learning and engagement is phenomenal and we are really seeing the positive effects of all you are doing. This means that the gaps in learning when we return will not be as large as the first time we went into lockdown – that's amazing and is only happening because of the effort and support you are putting into remote learning. You will never know how much we appreciate all of your hard work as parents. Teaching isn't the easiest job and you are doing a great job! Remember that we are all here to support you and can be contacted on all of the usual numbers and methods. As soon as we get the go-ahead we want to bring all children back to school so that we can learn and they can play with their friends. We don't like this situation anymore than you do and we really do miss the children.

Take care and stay safe!

Mrs Robertson  
#teamwillowfields

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