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Main Points:

- We are working to keep things as normal as possible for the children – thank you for your cooperation
- Parents Evening reminder – next Thursday. 5 minute voice call appointments.
- We are preparing in case bubbles are sent home and will be introducing you to SeeSaw and Reading Bug soon – please look out for log in details.
- Lancashire is in the highest Covid alert level; please follow all guidance.

October 15th 2020

Parents,

The children are managing with new routines amazingly well. Many have had to get used to 'getting started' and 'keeping going' again and many are ready for half term as the rigour of a school day has been a shock to the system. However, it has been clear that many of you spent time on learning activities during our 'closure'; thank you. With the allocated catch-up funds we have allocated additional teacher and teaching assistant hours and identified gaps which we are addressing. The tutoring plan that was talked about in the media is designed for secondary schools.

Overall, we are working to keep things as normal as possible for the children; we have got a date to restart swimming lessons and, bikeability lessons take place next week. We have found the desks all facing forwards was impacting on learning and as it wouldn't change who would have to self-isolate, desks have moved in KS1 and will change in KS2 after half term – staff are wearing masks/visors when working closely with children and are keeping in their separate bubbles apart from at distanced meetings.

Thank you for your cooperation in the changes you as parents have had to make. Please remember that parents are asked not to enter school unless for a planned meeting, use phone and email and avoid dropping off items at the office unless absolutely necessary. The toilet in the foyer is used by a designated group of staff and signed-in visitors and is not available for use – please plan ahead.

Parents Evening is this Thursday which will be a new experience. We have tested the system and are crossing fingers for a good internet connection etc. If parents are logged in, it will count down to the appointment time and then connect you. Six minutes are allocated for each appointment on the system for the five minute appointments so the last minute is for teachers to jot notes from the meeting and to get the right papers in front of them for the next; there wasn't a way to leave a minute break between meetings so don't be surprised when the meeting ends before the count-down reaches zero.

We have been lucky up to now that there have been no positive cases in adults or children at school. We are doing our best to keep staff and pupils separate but if there is a case, have prepared so that we can inform the right group(s) to self-isolate quickly. If a child has symptoms then of course that child and their family have to self-isolate but if a child has been instructed to self-isolate due to a case within their bubble and they have no symptoms, please be aware that brothers and sisters of that child are expected to continue to attend school.

Thank you for your responses to our surveys around the learning activities we provided during lockdown. Teachers appreciated your thanks and positive comments. New expectations on schools around remote education provision have been shared with schools and we have been exploring options.

Looking forward, it was clear that the vast majority of Great Wood children are able to access learning through the internet. "Supporting home learning is hard but we do our best and we are OK" was the option that was used most frequently to identify parent comfort-level with the situation. A small number of children were identified as having poor access and plans are in place to support these (school iPads were



provided for a few in the summer.) If you see access as a problem in your home please make sure that you have identified this with the class teacher or myself. The most commonly identified problem with home learning was the support that parents can provide for children due to number of children and work responsibilities however there is not much that can be done about these problems. A number of parents expressed a desire for 'live teaching' streamed into their living rooms. Unfortunately, there are currently insurmountable practical and safeguarding concerns and this isn't a route that we will be pursuing.

In the coming days and weeks children and you will be introduced to a number of new websites. The platform SEESAW is being introduced: teachers can post learning activities and can see and respond to children's work; children can take pictures, draw, record videos and post their work; and families can leave comments and encouragement and can only see their child's work.

Seesaw allows much more interactive communication between pupil and teacher and can be accessed on a phone, tablet or computer and it will replace us posting learning on the website or emailing it. To ensure access to levelled reading books and reading comprehension activities we have also created pupil accounts for Reading Bug. Teachers will be setting tasks, breaking down larger tasks and if a year group bubble is at home posting tasks each day rather than for a week. To ensure that children are familiar with the platforms and websites teachers will be introducing children to them as soon as possible in class and then using them as part of homework so we can sort out access glitches at a time we are able to fix them. Teachers have been using the Oak Academy website in their teaching so that children are familiar with the format and how to use the videos and tasks.

If an individual child is self isolating, they are directed to learning on the Oak Academy website for the appropriate week for learning activities.

Our introductory offer to use IXL was extended but has now ended. It served its purpose to practice learned skills but it is not appropriate for learning new skills. Parents can always sign up for an introductory offer if they liked it. There are other offers like this available to parents which can be useful.

Exploring options has taken time and now decision have been made staff are being introduced to new ways of communicating and teaching. Bear with us as we get to grips with the details and constructive feedback is always welcome.

Please read the letter from Mark Woodhead, PTA Chair. Perhaps we have a parent involved in construction with access to a digger.

The children have been learning about some new great artists. All our great artists last year were white and this is a more varied group of artists. We will post photos of the children's responses on our Facebook site. In response to some feedback, please note that our Facebook page is a public site – you do not need to be a user of Facebook to see the posts. You can link in via the f logo on our website and see our posts.

This too will pass.

John Ross
Headteacher