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Newsletter
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Return to School in September

I am sure you will all be aware of the government's intention to get all children back in school for September. There is still a lot of detail to work through as we try to establish exactly what we can and cannot do. There will still be adaptations to implement. For example, I expect there to be staggered starts and finishes to the school day and separate break times and lunchtimes. The hardest part for schools to manage is/are the bubbles. How many we are allowed to have in a bubble will impact what we can provide and how we maintain safety with the minimisation of fuss.

For now, I am waiting further clarification of points I and other headteachers have raised with the Local Authority. The LA talk directly to the Department for Education who then give their responses. I assume I will be having a very busy Summer. No doubt the guidance will continue to change, meaning planning for the children to return and completing further risk assessments is a continuous battle.

Obviously, I will keep you all up to speed as and when I know exactly what our offer will look like and how any changes we have to make will impact you as parents. For the moment, we look forward to seeing the children return on Monday 7th September.

Summer Term Returners

I thought it would be helpful to share with you all that the children who have returned to school this summer have had a really positive experience. As you can appreciate, there were a few nerves from all concerned when we started back. However, the staff got together and planned out a very thorough return to school to ensure that safety was our number one priority, followed by supporting the children's mental health and well-being. Once those were established and continue to be at the forefront of our thinking, the learning has then been run in parallel with our home learning provision. The only difference has been that the children at school have access to an adult at school if they get stuck rather than trying to ask you when you are in the middle of umpteen other things at home.

Leavers' Assembly

I have been holding on and waiting as long as possible to know how or even if we could hold a leavers assembly for our Y6 children. At this stage, I am hopeful we can hold an outdoor event for the Y6s and their children only. We can socially distance each family group in the playground and go through our usual routine as best as possible, sharing some memories of the children during their time at school and giving out awards. I think this will work best on the final day of term in the afternoon when the children can then leave school by ringing the bell one final time. Unfortunately, there won't be the usual guard of honour and all the school parents to send them off but it will certainly live in the children's memories that they had a very unique leavers' assembly compared to everybody else!

Holiday Requests and Attendance

You all know that I am always trying to work with families and support you all as best as I can. However, I thought it very prudent to put out there straight away about how holiday requests and general attendance will be viewed going forwards.

Due to the unprecedented times, it is absolutely essential that children attend school as often as possible to help make up for the lost learning over the past months. Time requested away from school will not be considered unless it relates to the most extreme of exceptional circumstances. Any holiday taken in the next academic year will be forwarded on to County and there is every likelihood that parents would face a fine.

This position has been made very clear to all headteachers. In this instance I have to agree that what children need more than anything right now is time to reconnect with their friends to ensure their mental health and well-being is sound and then they can work on making their learning a focus going forwards.

Likewise, children who have had historic poor attendance and children though this academic year with poor attendance will be a focus of my attention. I have a duty of care to ensure that the children are attending school as often as possible as the long term effects of being away from school can have long lasting negative consequences.

Of course, all the above is dependent on how any second spikes in the virus or how local lockdowns impact school provision but it also highlights the importance of being at school whilst we have the opportunity to do so.

Exciting Times

Some of you may be thinking that is an unusual heading bearing in mind the circumstances. However, despite the difficulties Covid has posed to everybody, we have been pushing the school forwards with a raft of improvements. Many of you will now have seen how wonderful the playground is looking now that it is finally completed with the line markings. We are so delighted with the end result and cannot wait until when the children finally get the chance to use it properly.



The school hall has been completely redecorated too. The end result is fantastic. The whole room is light, bright and so lovely for the children to use now. We have replaced the old display boards with modern, perspex covered, lockable, display boards so that any work we showcase will stay in pristine condition, even if there are balls flying around in P.E.!



← During the redecorating ↓ The finished result



Not only that but we have a new 86" Viewsonic board being installed today. This will be used for intervention and booster groups as well as for assemblies. It has an electronic height adjustable function and will be housed on a mobile trolley. This means we can wheel it out onto the playground and use it as an electronic display screen to share information with you (weather permitting of course).

Mrs Bethell's Outdoor Classroom

I informed you a few months ago that school had received a grant to improve Mrs Bethell's outside area. During lockdown, when it was safe to do so Mrs Bethell, with the help of her family, went about installing new equipment and ordering in resources to improve the opportunities and learning for children in her class. The results are awesome compared to what we had before. Now there is a stage, housing area, climbing wall, water wall, A to Z Dragon and many more resources for the children to use. A huge thank you to all who helped install a wonderful area for the children.



We have also invested in a new mobile PA unit which can be used both for assemblies and outside events like sports days. Rather than me fighting against the elements when trying to address a large audience outdoors, hopefully everything will be audible now.

Not Standing Still

We are constantly looking to improve the resourcing and infrastructure here at Reedham. These improvements have been made so they can help us to deliver outstanding learning to your children. Over the summer, we also wish to implement another wave of improvements. I am taking proposals to improve the upstairs area of the school and hall flooring, as well as purchasing additional Chromebooks and replacing outdated teacher laptops to governors next week. Fingers crossed many if not all of these proposals will be passed. Going forwards, the IT investments for teachers will enable us to deliver online learning should another lockdown occur. All of this puts us in a fantastic position for the start of the new year.

How are we able to fund the improvements?

Some of you may be wondering how on earth are we able to fund all these improvements at such a difficult time? Most schools will find themselves in very challenging positions, financially. Well myself and the governors have always kept a tight grip on the school finances. During the past few years when numbers fell we had to scrimp and save and do what we could. Thankfully we picked up enough children from year to year to offset any further reductions to staff or planned improvements.

We now find ourselves in a very unusual position. Last January, the number on roll stood at 41 and I was starting to get a little bit worried. However, we made a conscious push to sell ourselves better to the wider community and sing our praises more effectively. Thanks to parents' help as well, spreading our good name, we have seen a steady influx of children coming over to us over the last eighteen months.

All those new children and families have only had positive experiences, in keeping with what we had here already. Now we have a stronger parental voice who are expressing their positive experiences with a wider audience and so the school's good reputation is spreading further afield. Hopefully you share the pride in your school like we do as we have worked so hard to get ourselves into this position.

This year we started with 60 on roll and next year at the time of writing we will have 69 starting. As each child carries funding, this means instead of cutting back and going without, we can start to plan and spend money we know is coming to us. As mentioned, due to careful investments over the years, all the extra money now coming to us can be invested, rather than paying off previous ventures.

We hope to welcome our new children and families in September and give them a truly quality learning experience in a dynamic, safe and nurturing environment. This outlook has seen us well over the past few years and we will aim to go from strength to strength.

Open Door

I always put this in our newsletters and it really isn't a token gesture - it comes from the fact that every member of staff here at Reedham cares passionately about helping children and their families. We always have an open door with anything that you would like to share with us. Mrs Bethell, Miss Spaul and myself are always willing to listen to concerns and help where we can, whether that is to support you and your families' needs, as well as children's learning. We are a friendly and supportive school community who want to help. Never be afraid to share any issues you may have. If school and home work together, children will reap the benefits.

Classes For Next Year

As I mentioned earlier, with increasing numbers of pupils, we are now able to go back to three full classes rather than the two and a half classes we have had for the past few years. This means that Mrs Bethell and Mrs Fransham will continue to teach Herons class made up of YR/Y1/Y2. Owls class will now be shared between myself and initially a short term cover teacher each week until Christmas, along with Mrs Woodards. My job share will become a permanent position from January when I am in a position to interview face to face. Otters class will be with Miss Spaul and Mrs Kelf all day, every day.

Classroom Moves

Owls class is going to be bigger than Otters for the first time in a long time. The Owls will require more space in order to teach them effectively. This means that when we return in September, Owls will be taught in the larger classroom next to the serving hatch in the back of the school whilst Otter's will have Mr Edwards' old classroom that leads off directly from the hall.

School Reports

Initially, I was under the impression that we didn't have to write reports this year as so much time has been lost to the pandemic and lockdown. We were also in a position where all testing like SATs had been cancelled and we had held a second round of parent meetings with you all pre-lockdown. Then official government directives said we needed to provide parents with a written report. As a result, we have been working extra hard to put these together on top of teaching all day without breaks and providing an online offer of learning to the majority of our pupils still working from home.

We have amended the report so that we can effectively comment on what we had covered up until lockdown struck but it can in no way show the progress of children since then if they have been at home for all this time. The English and Maths comments have been generalised to give a more balanced account of what has been covered but to also give you as parents a better indication of where the children are with their learning when we last saw them in school. This is frustrating as often children make the most progress in the last part of the year, which of course has been taken away from them.

The reports should go out on Monday 13th July electronically this year instead of paper copies. If you wish to have a paper copy, please can you let Mrs Saunders know and she will make sure you get one. Likewise, if you wish to discuss the report with your child's class teacher, please phone in to make a telephone appointment.

Term Dates

In this space I would usually highlight all the many and varied learning opportunities the children would be taking part in over the course of the Autumn term. With social distancing and rules limiting cross contamination between schools still in place, all cluster events and school trip opportunities have had to be postponed.

I have spoken to Mr Grayson, the cluster extended schools coordinator about offering differing types of learning experiences via online services like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. A trial Year 6 cluster quiz has already taken place this week with the intention of rolling out other online based cluster events next term. If the rules are relaxed and we are able to put on more activities for the children we will aim to do so but in the meantime, I can only provide you with the term dates for the year!

Wednesday 2nd - Friday 4th September - Staff Professional Development days

Monday 7th September - Children Start back to School for autumn term

Thursday 22nd - Friday 30th October - Autumn half-term

Monday 2nd November - Children start back after half-term

Friday December 18th - Last day of Autumn Term

Monday 21st December 2020 - Friday 1st January 2021 - Christmas holiday

Monday 4th January 2021 - Spring term starts

Monday 15th - Friday 19th February 2021 - Spring half-term

Monday 22nd February 2021 - Children start back after half-term

Friday 26th March 2021 - Last day of the Spring term

Monday 29th March 2021 - Friday 9th April - Easter holiday

Monday 12th April 2021 - Summer term starts for children

Monday 3rd May 2021 - No school due to Bank Holiday

Monday 31st May 2021 - Friday 4th June - Summer half-term

Monday 7th June 2021 - Children start back after half-term

Wednesday 21st July 2021 - Leavers Assembly & Last day of summer term

Excluding cluster events, here are a few of the other activities that we still have question marks over going into the new school year: Face to face parents evenings, flu vaccines for whole school, individual and sibling photographs, Children in Need day, height and weight measure for YR and Y6, Christmas Play and the Carol Service.

Depending on what happens with regards the spread of the virus and therefore as the advice changes, only then will we be able to make decisions about whether these events will go ahead and if so how they will be managed.

APASH Cluster Chair Role

This summer, Paul Henery, headteacher of Acle Primary School, is stepping down from his role. This means he will be leaving both the school and his role as the Acle Cluster Association of Primary And Secondary Headteachers (APASH) chairperson. As the longest serving headteacher in the Cluster, I have volunteered and been accepted by the other cluster heads to run the headteachers association in his place.

The cluster of schools for this area have for a very long time worked well together. We pay money into a shared pot that enables us access to Special Educational Needs support and to be able to put on a comprehensive range of cluster based activities that all schools can take part in.

Being in charge of APASH means going forwards I can take a direct hand in leading the cluster offer and keeping Reedham Primary and Nursery School at the forefront of these opportunities.

Final Message and Thank You

This year has been the most difficult one I can remember as a teacher and created a whole set of problems we could never have envisaged when we started out back in September. Yet at every step of the journey, together as a school community we have faced the challenges and come through this intact. I know you will all have had your lockdown battles and I'm sure I will get to hear about a few of your stories in the months to come but I wanted to say thank you, parents. Thank you for supporting us as a school as we have strived to help you to help your children.

We have always tried to work in partnership with families and for us to turnaround a home learning offer within a few days speaks volumes about my staff too. I know they wouldn't want to take any credit. However, you wouldn't be aware that not only during lockdown have they been providing home school learning opportunities, they have also been completing online training courses to upskill their knowledge, they have been coming up with activities to engage and inspire our local community and they have completely re-written our curriculum so we can start afresh in September. The new improved curriculum is not only focused on academic achievement, but it also reflects and embeds an approach to teaching the children the values and skills we want each and every child to learn implicitly. This has been an incredible achievement.

Together we make an awesome team. So thank you to my staff and thank you to all the parents who have supported us along the way. Here's to a brighter 2020/2021.