

Chelmondiston Church of England Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs Lesley Etchingham



25th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am sure that you will have seen the news regarding the announcement that **schools will re-open to all pupils from Monday 8th March**. Children's education has been significantly disrupted for almost a year and it is important that we now have clarity on when we can welcome them back in. I know that the lockdowns have been very challenging for many families and it is absolutely right that the needs of children and schools should be prioritised.

Until children return on 8th March, teachers will continue to provide home-learning activities and recordings for the children. We have been really impressed by the high level of engagement, work and effort we have seen. We know home-learning can be difficult. However, if you can continue to help your child(ren) to engage with this, they will feel more connected to school and will be more likely to return successfully. As usual, if you have any difficulties with home-learning, please contact the teacher via Class Dojo.

We have been open for many children throughout the lockdown and they should be really proud of how well they have been doing. However, it is a long time since most children have been in school. They will need a period of re-adjustment while they become familiar, once again, with daily routines and the usual 'rhythms' of school life. At first, our aims will primarily be to support children's **wellbeing**, help them **settle back into the school routines** and expectations and to **assess their educational needs**.

What was it like last time children returned after a lockdown?

There were some things we noticed when children returned to school after the last lockdown. These may not have affected every child but it is important that we are aware of possible challenges and work together to make the return to school as successful as possible.

- Many **children had less stamina** than usual, which meant that they found longer tasks difficult and the structure and length of the school day tiring. This is why it is helpful for them to get plenty of sleep and to build up their stamina through good routines and exercise.
- School will still not be back to 'normal'. **Children responded better when they were prepared** and they had conversations at home about what school might be like.

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- Children needed time to get used to being around other children again. **Social and friendship skills, like sharing and taking turns, needed to be supported** and children needed time to adjust.
- Many children were **less resilient**, meaning that they needed more help to 'bounce back' from any setbacks or problems, both with their learning and socialising. They needed to feel happy, secure and supported rather than pressured to 'catch up'.
- Having been used to a higher ratio of adult to child support at home, we found that some children were not as independent as they would normally be in school.

What can you do to help?

With these issues in mind, it will greatly help your children's emotional and mental wellbeing if you can try to prepare them for returning to school by:

- **Continuing to engage with home-learning**, so that they are used to doing school work and to minimise any gaps in their learning;
- **Making sure that they have some typical daily routines**, such as when they get up, when they do school work and when they go to bed;
- **Ensuring they get some exercise** and have good sleeping patterns;
- **Talking to them about returning to school** and what it will be like so that they know what to expect and they remember school rules;
- **Reminding them of the school's Christian values** (and they are **Be Caring, Be Equal, Be Resilient** and **Be Courageous**) which helps them feel like part of the school community and helps them think about how they treat each other;

Of course, this is not yet a return to 'normal'. I will review our Risk Assessment with staff and check Government guidance carefully to ensure we are properly organised and the school environment is as safe as possible for your children and the staff. It is likely that we shall need to put in place similar safety measures as we did in the autumn term; the children adjusted to them remarkably well in September so we do not expect this to be a problem. This means that:

- **Children will stay in 'bubbles'** throughout the day and not mix with other 'bubbles';
- There will be **staggered start and finish times** to avoid large groups of parents gathering outside;
- We shall continue to use a one-way system for entering the premises and use the **different key stage gates** at drop-off and pick-up times to reduce the number of adults queuing up together
- **Parents will need to wear face coverings** at drop-off and pick-up times;
- **Adults in school will wear face coverings** in communal areas and at the gates and whilst working closely with children.
- There will be **increased hand-washing and sanitising**;
- **Parents will not be allowed onto the school site** except in very special circumstances.

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- Children can come to our wrap around care - Early and Late Bird Club (though after school sports clubs won't recommence until after Easter)

Additionally, school **staff members are now taking Lateral Flow Tests twice a week** in order to identify asymptomatic people who may be passing on the virus without realising. This is a really important step in breaking chains of transmission and making schools as safe as possible. Most importantly, we are looking forward to welcoming all the children back into school! Please look out for further communication from school next week and continue to take care to follow any guidance closely.

By working together as a community, we can make sure the children's return is as successful as possible.

Thank you for your continued support,

LESLEY ETCHINGHAM

Lesley Etchingam
Headteacher

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