

Oaklands Junior School

Headteacher - Mrs H West

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well. May I thank you for all your support over the last two months. It is one thing to take on home schooling for a brief period of time but none of us expected this to have gone on for so long. I am thankful that my staff have all remained safe and well, to be able to support school and home learning.

Thank you to all the parents that have completed the Covid-19 Wellbeing survey. This will help us prepare for all children returning to school and learn if there is any further way we can help you or your family. If you have requested contact from a member of staff, we will follow this up as soon as we possibly can.

As each month passes, we have learnt more and more about our children and families, in all that you have achieved over this time which has been very impressive. Although this has not been an ideal situation, I am very much of the opinion that the children will have learnt so many new skills that will stand them in good stead for their future lives. Children are often more resilient than we give them credit for and will soon settle back into school routines when we are fully open. It has been wonderful to welcome more children into school with a growing number of Key Workers now returning to work and our Y6s, already in their second week back. Our children have quickly learnt our social distancing rules and have been brilliant in adapting their games at break and lunch to accommodate this. It is wonderful to see so many happy children back in school, being able to interact socially with each other and keen to learn.

What are the latest Government announcements this week? On Tuesday we learnt that there had been a change of direction and the Government now believe it is no longer feasible wanting all children to return to school a month before the end of term. It seems that they have finally realised that within our present Government guidelines (only 15 children per group with social distancing still in force), that this is impossible for any school to achieve, without doubling the number of classrooms and doubling the number of staff. **There is nothing we would like more than to invite all children back into school**, but only as soon as it is safe to do so and we are continually reviewing the possibilities. On Wednesday we learnt from the BBC news that the government are considering plans for an extended catch-up for schools, to be launched for the summer and beyond, to help pupils get back on track. Our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said at Wednesday's daily briefing that the government would be doing "a huge amount of catch up for pupils over the summer". We await with interest to learn what this may entail.

Our Current Situation in School: We are very near capacity at present with our Key Worker group and our four Y6 groups, with a limited number of staff available to ensure the safe running of each group; staff stay with their group and do not mix in other groups to ensure there is no cross-contamination. Similarly, pupils stay in their groups and cannot mix with any other groups at this time.

Regarding pupil numbers, there are still a limited number of places available and we would ask if there are any Key Workers or Y6 parents requiring a place for their child, please do send us a request for a place, with an anticipated date for return to admin@oaklands-jun.wokingham.sch.uk or hls@oaklands-jun.wokingham.sch.uk. We cannot guarantee a place for everyone, so please do not send your child into school until you have had confirmation from us that this can be accommodated. We need to reassess numbers to ensure that we do not go over our limit and also that we have the staff availability.

My Staff: never cease to amaze me in all that they are achieving with work both in and out of school. Many are on a school rota teaching 15 children for two days, in a year group that is not their own and still needing to prepare work on OWL for their own classes. Staff in school are also on a rota for breaktime and supervising lunchtime, so have very little free time. In addition, some are also at home with their own children for home learning. At this point of the year, teachers are also writing reports for their classes, whilst working hard to prepare for our next academic year.

New technology has been embraced in this lockdown through the use of Teams with weekly drop-in video sessions (including chatting with children in the Teams chat before and after these sessions), trialling Teams assignments, daily morning videos/stories, as well as reviewing work being uploaded and adding comments. The possibility of 'live-streaming lessons' has been raised previously, but due to safeguarding and online safety concerns, our local authority have advised not to proceed. In all of this, my staff have been brilliant in keeping positive and doing the best for our children, their classes and other children in the school community, going over and beyond their normal teaching responsibilities, but also still looking for new ways that we can reach out to our children. Staff have had lots of ideas for transition in all year groups that we are now investigating and we are all thinking about the events that we have lost and whether we can provide something a little different for some of the events that we have all missed.

My Senior Leadership Team: are looking for ways we can have more children back in school but at this point in time it is not practical. We have followed government guidance and health & safety to organise groups which stay separated from other groups throughout the day, with their own toilets/washing facilities. At present, this means that our Year group areas for Years 4, 5 & 6 are already being used with staff spread amongst these groups. This has to remain as it is at present until there is further guidance from the government that relaxes social distancing. At that time, we might then be able to mix groups and extend the size of our groups with teachers working with more than one group. Once we have further government guidance on how this can realistically be achieved safely, we will keep you informed of any further changes or opportunities to return.

In the light of this we will be sending out a separate survey to year groups 3, 4 & 5 to gauge the interest of parents in the possibility of children returning to school; that way we will have a better idea, when and if restrictions are lifted, as to what we can do safely. We are also working on many different ways we can help all our year groups with transition. If we do not achieve this before the summer break, we will endeavour to find a way for children in September to return to their current class teacher, before they move on to their next class. There is a lot to consider but we would like our teachers and children to have that opportunity to be together, however briefly, before they move on.

Please rest assured that we will do our very best for you and your children and we appreciate that government announcements are very last minute (when you hear the news, it is the first time we hear it too)! We have, however, learnt to think on our feet and ultimately make decisions on what we can best do for our school community, with a priority that ensures everyone's safety.

Please continue to keep healthy and stay safe.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. H. West
Headteacher