



# Newsletter 10

1 May, 2020

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the summer term. As the lockdown continues, relatively little has changed, and we have all begun to get used to the new 'normal'. I'm sure we all can't wait until things start getting better again, and hopefully it won't be too long before we all see each other again in school.

As you will know, the staff have been keeping in touch, setting work and providing advice, encouragement and support. I have been amazed by the many creative ways this is being done, including videos, stories, songs, art and music. We have been following up any children where there has been little contact, and I'm pleased to say there has been very little incidence of COVID illness among our school population.

I'm sure you will be reassured to know that there have been no incidents of staff or children who have been in school being ill. We are keeping hygiene in school our top priority, and we are continuing to enjoy a very positive response from children and families to maintain social distancing procedures as far as is realistically possible. Additional cleaning measures have also been put in place. Well done to all our support staff: caretaker, cleaners, kitchen and office staff and our lunchtime and breakfast club team. Everyone has played an important role in keeping things going and keeping everyone safe.

### What next?

The arrangements for the immediate future seem likely to be the same as now, if the lockdown continues. Other countries are beginning to relax their controls, which includes children returning to school, mostly on a phased basis. I imagine we will follow suit in due course, possibly at the start of Term 6. Whenever that happens, we will be ready and very happy to welcome you back to school.

In the meantime stay safe and keep checking the website for updates and new communications from the staff. We have a few surprises that we are currently working on to be revealed soon!

Best wishes,

**Mark Freeman, Headteacher**

### Website Highlights

There continue to be all sorts of activities and links on the school website, so please do take time to browse the pages with or without your child to get a flavour of all that's going on. You will be surprised and amazed at some of the things our children (and staff) are doing to keep busy and amused!

### New starters

We welcome 90 new children who have been given places for September, and we look forward to seeing them all before too long.

We have written to all parents of new starters this week to begin the process of putting children into classes, and we hope that by September we are well on the way to being back to business as usual.

Page 2

More staff news  
Budget & future plans  
Home learning

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### Staff News

At this time of year there are always some staff movements, and this year is no exception. Sadly for us there are two leavers: **Miss Sumner (Y5)** who is moving back to Plymouth because of her partner's work – and **Mrs Abbott, our fabulous Deputy Head**. Mrs Abbott is relocating with her husband to the Wirral, mostly to be nearer her parents and family. Mrs Abbott has taught at St Michael's for 21 years, and has been Deputy Head for 4 of those. It is really hard to imagine things without her, and we wish her all the best for the future. Despite the lockdown the appointment process is well under way and we hope to be able to finalise our staffing over the next few weeks. (See next page for more staff news)

### Supporting Home Learning and wellbeing

I am really impressed with how well children and their families have engaged with home learning, whilst recognising that for most people this can be quite challenging at times.

Please talk to your child's teacher – ideally by class dojo – if you are finding anything particularly difficult, or if you are concerned about your child's mental health. We are able to provide a range of support ourselves – for example our trained Thrive practitioners can contact you directly – but also make referrals to other agencies.

We want to do everything we can to help our families cope with the current situation so please get in touch, even if you just want to have a chat or even a Facetime talk.

### Other staff news

**Mrs Herbert's maternity leave.** Mrs Herbert's maternity leave starts in three weeks, at the end of Term 5. In normal circumstances we would have appointed a replacement for Term 6. However, because of the current situation, we are likely to wait until September to appoint a new teacher as a direct replacement.

Mrs Derrick, who has been supporting the class throughout this year, will be the link teacher to support home learning, alongside Ms Frost. Once it is clear when/if the children will return we will make further arrangements.

### Classes next year

We are starting to plan for next year: it is likely that all classes will remain as they are and that we will not mix any of them up. This will help ensure continuity and reduce the anxiety that some children feel when changes are made. It is likely that it will take a while for everything to get back to normal, and we want to reduce the potential for uncertainty as much as possible.

If there are any specific requests for individual changes, please discuss with your current child's teacher, or contact Miss Bradley (KS1) or Mrs Stephens (KS2).

### Budget and Future Plans

After years of cutbacks to our budget, which has impacted on all aspects of school life, things are at last set to get better. We have had a real terms increase this year of around 10% due to a new minimal funding formula, and we are looking to invest in the following priority areas:

- Increased teacher support to allow more intervention opportunities and greater staff development.
- Increased teaching assistant support across the school so that we can give more attention to individual needs. This will then mean teachers can focus more on the whole class needs.
- Investment in buildings and grounds. We will shortly be installing a MUGA on the field; creating a new garden area near the pond; improving fencing around the school; restructuring the Reception outside area
- Investment in resources: setting up a new Thrive room; investing in additional laptops and ipads; investing in lots more reading materials

Finally, we will be aiming to provide additional support for children on their return to school to help ensure they settle in quickly and catch up any lost ground. This will be a key priority over the coming months.

### Teaching Assistant posts

We will shortly be advertising 2 or 3 teaching assistant posts for the coming year, as a result of our funding increase (see right hand column).

Please keep an eye on **eteach** <https://www.eteach.com/> for details.

