



BROAD CHALKE C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Newtown, Broad Chalke, Salisbury, Wilts, SP5 5DS.

Tel: 01722 780212

e-mail: admin@broadchalke.wilts.sch.uk website: www.broadchalke.wilts.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs Amanda Brockway

Chair of Governors: Mrs Louise Hall



8th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Here we go again....

Well, what a start to 2021 this has been! Monday 4th January was the longest day for school staff, who ended up planning late into the evening, and the shortest term in school for many of our pupils. I don't think any of us quite expected such an abrupt halt to the Spring term in school for so many children. I am very grateful to all of our staff that following that 8pm announcement on Monday from the Prime Minister, the school team had a plan ready to put in place, were able to communicate it to parents and be ready by 8am the next day. Is it really Friday already? And yet Monday already seems like a very long time ago. I'm sure that many parents feel the same way.

On Tuesday the teachers, with some trepidation, launched into teaching in a completely different way, using technology which is still relatively new to them. Also, our wonderful teaching assistants were ready in classrooms to take responsibility for teaching those children allocated places in school, taking on a very different role to the one which they are used to. The staff really are quite outstanding and I am incredibly grateful to them for everything which they are doing at such short notice. They are all supporting one another too as we are having to learn as we go.

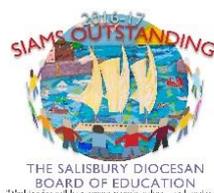
The parents have also risen to the very real challenges of home learning and we are all incredibly grateful for your support. Primary school children are just too young to do the learning tasks without parental support so your huge contribution is much appreciated. Then there are the children themselves, once again showing how adaptable they can be to yet another change; I am so very proud of them all. The children at home are exceeding my expectations with their engagement with Seesaw and the Zoom meetings – even when we suffer power cuts at school and their teachers unexpectedly disappear!

My newsletters are, I hope, usually upbeat and positive (as above) but I also need to take this opportunity to deliver a very serious message. We are obviously now at a very critical moment in trying to control the virus, especially because of this new and highly transmissible variant. I need to make a heartfelt request to parents who are requesting places in school and can only hope that I do not cause any offence or upset. I don't normally write to you in this way and hope that you will therefore appreciate how important the issue of places available in school is to us ALL.

Who should attend school? This is directly from the Department for Education yesterday:

*'During the period of national lockdown, schools should allow only vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend. All other pupils and students **should not attend** and should learn remotely until February half term. Schools should not plan for rotas or allow children other than those who are vulnerable or whose parent or carer is a critical worker to attend on-site, **even if the school believes it can accommodate more children safely.**'*

Parents are trusting all of us in school to keep the children as safe as we can. We are all trusting you as parents to do your part too and only to use a place in school if you are eligible and have absolutely no other alternative. The function of the school in a national lockdown is to support education but the purpose of children being physically in school is to enable key workers to continue essential work. Children on site who do not have to be here, pose an unnecessary risk to their own families, to the school staff (who are, of course, also key workers) and to the key worker parents of the other children at school. I also have a duty of care to the school staff.



Families need to think carefully about the potential hidden consequences of sending their children to school, especially as the children themselves can be asymptomatic carriers of COVID. Just to be clear, pupils are generally affected by COVID in the same way as before, often asymptomatic or with a mild illness. It is the rapid spread to adults which is the problem. The NHS simply will not be able to cope with the number of people requiring treatment. Therefore, schools should not expose more people than ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY to the risk.

Limiting attendance in school is about reducing the number of contacts that all of us have with people in other households. Provision in school is to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable children and to have the children of critical workers in to ensure that essential services can continue to function. The bottom line is the need for suppression of transmission of virus whilst case numbers are rocketing. Without this, and with too many children in school, the risk of transmission is higher. Therefore, critical workers are at more risk of becoming ill and unable to work.

No one wants schools to be 'closed'. But if schools have large numbers of children in everyday, transmission rates won't fall which will be catastrophic for everyone and completely undermine the national lockdown. Numbers registering to attend school in this lockdown are significantly higher than last time – I estimate them to be **6 times as high**. The children are in 7 seven separate bubbles which helps to manage and contain any potential risk within the bubble as young children find it impossible to socially distance.

I understand that it's difficult for all of our families and hugely challenging to work from home and carry out remote education at the same time. I understand that some children do not respond well to being taught remotely or having tasks explained to them by their parents. I understand that some people may need to work but are not key workers and having children at home impacts on your ability to work. But there is a bigger picture, and it's about protecting our frontline workers and saving lives.

What can parents do to help?

If you can keep your child or children at home, then you should.

We are doing everything we can to make the school as safe as possible for your child / children, for you and for the staff. We aim to serve our community in the best way that we possibly can and we are proud to 'serve one another in love' even if it puts us at risk just as it does for all key workers.

If you have reflected on this letter and feel that you could reduce the amount of days which you have requested for your child / children to be in school, please do get in contact with the school office. It will make a huge difference to us, to other keyworker families and a difference to the national effort to control the virus. Unfortunately, I am going to have to ring some parents to discuss their requests. I hope I will have your support and your understanding when I make those very difficult phone calls and I can assure you that this will NOT deprive anyone who is an official top priority for a school place from having a place as that would also be counter productive to the national effort.

Sometimes children are able to express things so simply and so beautifully. As one of our wonderful pupils wrote today: 'The true reason everything is shutting down and we should try to keep our distance from each other isn't out of fear, it's out of love. Remember that.'

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Amanda Brockway
Headteacher

