

7th January 2021

Dear Parents & Carers

First of all, can I say a massive thank you to everyone for once again supporting your child's learning and the school in our efforts to keep the children learning in such difficult circumstances. We know that many of you are under great pressure at home to keep the children working, keep working your selves and managing the use of IT devices etc.

Laptops and iPads

We are currently issuing IT devices where ever we can, and where there is greatest need. All 9 laptops which the Department for Education (DfE) provided to us are out on loan and we are currently awaiting the rest of our allocation which we hope may be available by the end of next week. Once delivered, each laptop has to be configured to work with our systems before allocation to children so we will work as quickly as possible to distribute them to children where they have been requested.

Currently the DfE has given these devices to schools for children who are entitled to Pupil Premium. If you believe your child falls into this category and your child has no access to a device to access online learning, please email the school on Heronsgate@mket.org.uk .

Exams

I especially feel for those families who have older children in exam years who, after working so hard, are now unable to take this year's GCSE and A-Level exams.

For those of you with children in Year 6 I can confirm that disappointingly the Year 6 SATs tests have again been cancelled. I say disappointingly because I know that our year 6 children have worked very hard already and they were on track to achieve very good results. Although the formal tests have been cancelled, the expectations for what children have to achieve by the end of year 6 in preparation for secondary school have not. As with all other year groups we will continue to ensure, as best as we can, that the children continue to make good progress.

Key Worker Places

As you can imagine we have been inundated with requests for places at school for key worker pupils. If we were to accept all of the requests as well as the vulnerable children, we would have a significant proportion of children in school. This goes against the 'national lockdown' purpose and increases the risk for both staff and children in school. In the last lockdown guidance from the DfE stated that children should be in groups of no more than 15 with a cap of 20%.

We are already operating with a higher percentage than this at present. In order to keep children and staff safe, although not in the guidance so far this time, we believe that our classrooms can only safely accommodate a maximum number of 15 children in each group for this lockdown. Therefore, I would ask for your consideration when requesting a place. If you are working from home or have another adult in the household who is not a critical worker, I would ask that you keep your child at home and access remote learning.

We believe it is vitally important to reduce community transmission and keeping the numbers to a minimum is the safest way to achieve this. At Heronsgate, we know that the best place for children to learn is in school and we hope the situation improves as quickly as possible and they can return. Heronsgate is not the same without the children and we miss them all very much.

Remote Learning

We hope that access to remote learning has begun to improve for you at home after a bumpy start to the week. We do acknowledge and sympathise with you as regards the impact remote learning has on families. We are working to improve the systems we currently have in place particularly in regard to the Showbie platform and are exploring other avenues that are more child, parent and teacher friendly. We will of course keep you updated on any developments and can assure you that we will NOT be making any overnight changes so please continue to use Showbie for the time being.

The teaching staff delivering the Teams meetings are interacting with at least two classes, and due to some staff absences sometimes up to four, so we apologise in advance for any glitches. Daily Teams meetings are providing teacher input for both English and maths and in addition some sessions for feedback are also being offered. As we become more proficient in this style of teaching we will be offering video recording of some lessons which can be accessed at times to suit you and your family. Although very helpful for both learning and wellbeing the Teams meetings are not compulsory. We understand the complexity of managing remote learning whilst parents are working from home so we accept that children may be unable to access the Teams meetings.

Over the next few days we will be working on the feedback children will receive for completed work and will update you on developments next week.

The BBC has announced that it will be broadcasting lessons on BBC for primary age pupils and The Oak Academy also has thousands of lessons children may access to supplement the lessons delivered by their teachers Home - Oak National Academy (thenational.academy).

Support for Children

Below is an overview of the range of support we are providing for our children.

- Teachers are creating engaging online lessons and are providing support via Showbie and Microsoft Teams as well as responding to emails and MS Teams calls.

- Subject Leaders are providing advice and support for teachers in their teams and sharing best practice as we continue to learn together.
- Class teachers are monitoring children's engagement with the lessons set.
- Year group Managers are supporting teachers in their work and leading on ensuring content is available on Showbie and reflects what is taught in school for the key worker groups.
- Learning Support staff are in regular contact with children on the SEND register; checking lessons and ensuring appropriate differentiation is in place; responding to requests for assistance from children and alerting subject staff to subject specific queries.
- SEMH staff are in regular contact with vulnerable children; responding to requests for support; signposting external support; monitoring our safeguard portal (MyConcern) and responding as needed.
- Teachers, on a rota basis, are also teaching the children of key workers and vulnerable children who are in school.
- Finance and administrative staff are keeping the school functioning which enables others to provide the support detailed above as well as supporting parents by responding to calls and emails.

Finally

I would like to thank you for the many positive comments we have received from parents and children this week. The staff have really appreciated your kind words. I personally would like to once again thank you for your hard work too. You are also heroes and I will be clapping extra hard for the Heronsgate parents tonight!

Thank you for your continued support.

Please keep safe and well.

Kind Regards



Jane Edwards
Headteacher

Headteacher: Mrs J. Edwards B.A (Hons)
Deputy Head: Mrs C. Gardner-Potter B.Ed (Hons)

Chair of Governors: Mr K. Gowans
Business Manager: Mrs K. Greenhalgh