



25th February 2021

Dear Families and Friends,

With this week's announcement, it is clear that so very many of us are excited to be resuming face to face education from March 8th. Staff are very pleased to be welcoming back their classes.

We are aware with some pupils in the shielding category, that remote learning will need to continue for a minority, and we have you in mind too. Please be assured.

Attendance:

The government have been very clear to schools about expectations for attendance. This has been reflected in my recent discussions with our employers at the Local Authority – Central Bedfordshire Council. I have been advised that the school must adhere to attendance policies, unless a pupil *themselves* has medical evidence for shielding. We have had some queries regarding this matter, so please do contact me if this does not answer your questions.

First day back:

It is our intention when pupils return, that we focus on their wellbeing, and ensure they feel secure and welcome back to their class group. Your responses on our parent questionnaire, and the discussions in our parent focus group have really helped us to understand better what you feel works for the children, and what they are worried about. It is clear you have welcomed the staggered times, and that you wish the one way system to continue, and this fits with advice we have sought elsewhere too. Therefore, this will continue, along with wearing masks on site.

It is clear that children are concerned about their friendship groups, and if they will be in a class with their usual class teacher. We will be working on wellbeing activities, linked to playing together and unity on that first day, and children will be back in their usual class groups. It will be World Book Day before the children come back, so we have lots of opportunity for fun activities and arts related tasks too on the Monday. Our virtual World Book Day on 4th includes the opportunity to dress up for TEAMS too.

Worries:

In response to the pupil questionnaire, we feel it is vital that the children know who helps them in school and that we understand their worries. Next week, Mrs Parry and I will share an assembly presentation to talk about the worries children may have. We encourage you to watch this with the children and share with your class teacher if there is anything further you feel school should know.

Curriculum changes:

Our pupils have benefited from frequent short sharp sessions of PE activity with Mr Tilbury throughout each day, and this has not only supported their wellbeing and physical development, but another phenomenon from lockdown – learning stamina. We will continue to break up the day like this initially, so that children aren't overwhelmed by long learning sessions. This need came through strongly in our parent focus groups too. We understand that children will begin to need longer PE sessions, and this is planned for too.

Learning differentiation:

Our families have also voiced that some children are worried they might be falling behind. We wish to reassure our children and families, that we feel positive and know how to support their education. At Shefford Lower, we have designed a bespoke curriculum to ensure that core knowledge is revisited and embedded, alongside interventions. We also hear from you, that children are excited about getting back to learning and routine. Whilst we will focus on wellbeing, and continue to do so, this will not be at the expense of beginning a curriculum to ensure swift progress. We will continue to seek your views throughout this returning phase to make sure we have the balance right.

World Book Day:

World Book Day is always a fantastic hook to reinforce the importance of reading. It is proven that early reading provides crucial development that impacts the rest of a child's learning in all areas of the curriculum, right the way through to adulthood. We are very lucky to have our own author in school now too! Mrs Herbert read her fantastic book 'Bertie The Brave' to the children during lockdown, and it is available on Amazon. Teachers in school will be dressing up on Thursday with the children on TEAMS and in class to read their special books. We can't wait.



Staffing:

This term we are looking forward to welcoming back staff from maternity leave. Mrs Adams will return to Plum Class in March, and Mrs Miller will stay in the class to begin with, so that there is a smooth handover. We do not say goodbye to Mrs Miller though, as she will be teaching in Oak Class after this. To begin with, this will be with both Mrs Pearson and Mrs Robinson, but will hand over as Mrs Robinson takes on more work in her role of SENDCo. During the recent lockdown, we also welcomed back Mrs Hoyte from her maternity leave, and will be shortly seeing Mrs Smith return with an initial visit before Easter.

Science Week:

After World Book Day, we will be diving into British Science Week. We have been thrilled that some families have offered to make video recordings, if they work or have connections to Science. Please do let our Science Leader, Miss Hass, know if you can support us in this way too. Our aim is to use this wonderful week of learning to inspire the children and of course, do lots of hands on learning.

The Week Ahead:

It won't be long after that our focus shifts to Easter, so it is an incredibly fun term ahead.

For now, it is our final week of remote learning. We encourage the children to share something they are proud of for 'Wellbeing Wednesday'. Mr Wakefield has asked that if children have learned a new skill, or wish to share skill they are already proud of, to share it with their class. We are always impressed by the variety of different things children like to do.

We also have a special birthday to celebrate on Friday 12th, but more about that from my Assembly this coming Monday. We look forward to seeing you all.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Pamela Finch

M.Ed, NPQH, PG.Dip, PG.Cert, BAHons