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Newsletter 3 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy new year to you all! I know we were all hoping for a better start to 2021, however Lockdown 3.0 has been thrust upon us and we all adapting, once again, to being at home.

We have been nothing but impressed by the way parents and carers have taken on remote learning this time. We have around 92% of pupils working from home or in school, compared to the 25% of pupils we had in the last lockdown, which is incredible! We are working hard to get that last 8% of pupils on board too.

Safeguarding our pupils

We have a duty of care for all of our pupils, whether they are in school, or learning at home. All schools are directed from the Department of Education and the Local Authority to ensure that pupils are safe and well. As you can imagine, this is very difficult for us, especially as so many children are at home.

Parents and carers can help with this:

- If your child has a place in school but is not attending for whatever reason, please contact the school as per our usual attendance policy.
- If your child is at home, they should be attending all zoom lessons so that we can “have eyes” on your child. If you cannot attend the zoom lessons, then please notify the class teacher with a valid reason and we may follow up with a phone call.

Unfortunately, we have some parents who do not answer their phones or attend zoom meetings at all. Where this persists, we have been instructed by the Local Authority to alert them about concerns we may have about the family and they will decide whether a referral to Children's services or a Police Welfare check should be actioned. Obviously, we want to avoid taking this action and so are asking parents to please keep in regular contact with us.

Zoom meetings

Our zoom meetings have been very popular and feedback from both children and parents is that they are very welcome and appreciated. We just wanted to give a few tips and expectations for parents and children when joining meetings:

Dos

- Do have paper and pencil ready for the lesson
- Do make sure you are up, had breakfast and dressed for the lesson, as you would be at school
- Do make sure an adult in the house is within earshot of the lesson
- Do keep your sound on mute unless asked to speak
- Do sit at a suitable table, sitting up on a chair

Don'ts

- Don't turn up in your PJ's
- Don't join from your bed!
- Don't have any distractions around you eg phones, TV etc
- Don't fuss with the camera
- Don't use the chat function to chat to friends during the lesson – use it to let the teacher know if you have a problem
- Don't eat your breakfast during the lesson.



Technology Boost

We have been able to supply 15 children with a device to help with home learning. We had applied for laptops from the Government, however they have taken three weeks to arrive, so have had to lend out our existing equipment.

Along with those 25 Chromebooks, we have also secured a grant to buy another 25 from the Neighbourhood Grant fund, with their generous donation of £4,500. We have also received another £1,000 from local company Electronix International, to buy more tablets. We have also been nominated by Asda for some laptops and dongles to help families without internet. So, when all the children return, we will be fully kitted out to deliver a first-class Computing curriculum.

Skip2Bfit

This week we are launching our Skip2Bfit at home challenge. We know the children love seeing Dave in school, and the next best thing is to see him on video via our Class Dojo app. We have bought all children a brand-new pair of skipping ropes that have a skip counter, so that children can check their count and work hard to improve their score.

We know that, during the last lockdown, some parents and carers were concerned that their children had gained weight and so as not to repeat that, we think this would be an excellent way to get children active and away from their screens. We hope you can join in too and set a good example, showing the children how easy it is to get a little bit of exercise in.

Healthy Eating

We have made the decision to provide healthy and nutritious food parcels to our Free School Meals eligible pupils. We feel that we can purchase food in bulk and get more for our money than a single shopper could get. The food is nutritional and balanced with a few treats too. We have even been able to add enough food for breakfasts and drinks.

We have been given a grant for £500 from Gregg's Foundation to top up these food parcels, so will be adding to them, in the last week of term, some household essentials and toiletries.

During the February half term, Durham County council will be issuing food vouchers to FSM pupils. These will be sent via email, as they were during the Christmas holidays.

School's reopening

It is still very unclear as to when schools will reopen in the future. Like you, I keep a close eye on the news and any announcements from the Government. As soon as we know, we will let you know, however I will say that I do not expect it to be after February half term.

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support. Stay safe everyone!

Mrs N James
Headteacher