



The Village
Stockton on the Forest
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Dear Stockton on the Forest community,

As we reach the end of a very different first week, may I pass on my thanks to you all for the patience you have shown as we make and communicate with you about arrangements for on-site places. We have also all really appreciated the supportive comments we have received about our online learning provision, especially the encouragement as we undertake more of our role on film! I wanted to say a huge thank you to the whole staff team. I am exceptionally proud of the care and dedication they have shown and the hours they are putting into their role at present. Already a small team, our in-school staffing capacity has now reduced further as our admin staff and some of our TA staff must now shield. They are still working extremely hard from home and are very much part of the team effort but this does limit our capacity on site. Our catering providers have also been affected by the pandemic with staff who work at Stockton directly affected. I wish all of our staff and families who are currently unwell a very speedy recovery.

On-site Learning Places

At Stockton-on- the-Forest we are in the unusual position of having an extremely high number of key worker families. In fact, if everyone in this position were to take up a place, our school would be 90% fully open. **This current lockdown is very different from the March lockdown as the aim is to suppress the spread of the virus as we roll out the vaccine and protect our community and our NHS.** It feels very different to last time too as I am aware of many more cases directly affecting our local area.

Cases in our community are rising so **I continue to urge you, if you can keep your child at home then please do so** as this helps with the collective efforts to keep on top of the virus. **It is imperative we minimize community contacts.**

The guidance on 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown' states **"in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible."**

The guidance also contains the following advice: **"Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can."**

We are currently working with LA, Public Health and the LA Health and Safety departments to assess provision of places and any alternative provision that can be offered and ask for patience as work to resolve the difficulties faced.

If we have large bubbles of key worker children and one bubble has to isolate, critical key workers will not be able to go to work placing further pressure on our communities.

My sincerest thanks to all the parents and carers who have worked creatively and collaboratively, including joining up to form child care support bubbles and taking annual leave, in order to ease the pressures on school and each other. Thank you to the parents and carers who are only sending children to school on days where they cannot safely manage to keep their children at home. I am hopeful this is the last push and once we have more scientific data about the new variant, once more vaccines are rolled out, we can begin to move towards normality and begin to increase the numbers of pupils in school.

Remote Learning

Many thanks for engaging with this and for your positive and supportive comments. We will continue to listen to your suggestions and evaluate our home learning offer over the next few weeks. Again, the logistics of this presents more challenges to a small school, with a high number of key worker places, as we cannot split our teams into on-site and remote learning teams. For our children, this is much better as all of our children will access the same learning offer. For our teachers and teaching assistants, there is a lot of pressure and they are spending many hours providing teaching and learning. I could not be more proud of their efforts. Walking around school this week, I have witnessed teachers filming class introductions to children at home whilst delivering this same introduction to the children in class. They are teaching and supporting children in school at the same time as communicating with children and parents/carers at home – and sorting technical issues! All other areas of our roles still remain so it is challenging but I have witnessed smiling teachers and happy children in school (albeit they are a bit cold) and I have loved seeing the fantastic learning taking place at home. I will send separate communication solely about remote learning early next week but at present, do what you can, do your best and we will continue to improve together. I am very much looking forward to receiving an army of volunteers into school at the end of this after you have all developed a love for education! In terms of live sessions, we currently are connecting with the children through the pre-recorded posts which are being sent from school and received from home. We are planning to experiment with some Zoom reading sessions for small groups next week. Whole class live learning is trickier because of some of the needs of the children we have in school but we will continue to think things through and discuss the best ways forward as a staff team.

Provisions for Pupils Currently in School

If you have a child currently attending on-site learning, please can you send in a spare set of clothes and some indoor shoes if you have not already done so. Children will still need a water bottle and will need a packed lunch on Monday.

Please continue to wear masks and distance at drop off and collection times. Please do not send your child into school if they are displaying any of the following symptoms:

- A new continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of or change to taste and/or smell

Please notify us of any family member or contact who has tested positive, is displaying symptoms or who has come into contact with someone who has tested positive or if you have been contacted by track and trace.

Contacting Staff about Days Needed

Please contact **both myself and your child's class teacher** via Tapestry or Dojo as soon as you know which days will be needed each week. I appreciate many of you are working to shifts which are constantly changing but please do let us know as soon as you know as we need to ensure everyone is safe in school who needs to be.

School Meal Provision

A huge thank you to Lynsay Heppell for stepping up last week and cooking school lunches when nobody else was available and for agreeing to cover school lunches for us from next week. I was in awe at Lynsay's calm approach at providing a last minute lunch for a significant number of children. Much appreciated by all!

Mrs Mitchell will be in touch with you about next week's school lunches but please provide a packed lunch for your child/children on Monday. Arrangements are being made for FSM provision with our catering company and Mrs Mitchell will contact you directly if you qualify for FSM provision.

Wishing you a wonderful weekend. Stay safe and keep smiling! We will work through this together!

Lorraine Atkinson
(Headteacher)