

Dear Parents and Carers,

Tuesday 19th January, 2021.

I would like to give you a brief update on where we are currently in school.

No doubt you are feeling rather inundated with the amount of messages that you are receiving, these really are to try to keep you as informed as possible as things appear to constantly shift during this pandemic.

We remain closed to all children except children of Critical Workers and those who are deemed as vulnerable in the main school. Our Nursery remains open to all and we currently cater for children of Critical Workers and those who are vulnerable and are in touch regularly with families to see all their children's needs are met whilst being mindful that it is in the best interests of our youngest children to remain at home where they can.

As of this week all staff are able to access a Lateral Flow Device Test on a weekly basis at Cecil Jones Academy, who have extended their offer to staff working at the Hamstel Schools whilst we await our own staff testing kits. From next week we will be able to provide this offer ourselves when we are due to have received our allocation of testing devices for primary school staff. The staff will then have access to testing up to twice a week to support them in being able to regularly check they remain virus free. We are very grateful for this intervention by the Government and we will encourage all staff to access these resources.

I would like to remind parents and carers of the local testing facilities available for children and families to continue to access for testing to enable our community stays as free from infection as we have been able to do so far. If you, your child or anyone in your support bubble starts to show or develop symptoms I would encourage you to seek peace of mind by taking a test.

I would like to say a very big thank you for your engagement in our remote learning offer. The posts from home learning have been really uplifting and encouraging. A display of some of the work that has been sent in has been exhibited in the main corridor to celebrate the children's achievements and to share with all. I hope you have enjoyed being sent just a very small representation of what has been achieved through the class montages sent, I am sure the children will enjoy seeing others work too.

I would like to thank publically the teachers who are working from home to provide the remote learning and feedback on a daily basis to ensure there is access to relevant and structured learning opportunities. I would also like to thank publically the number of support staff who are in the classrooms with those children who are attending school. They are following the same remote learning as those at home to try to provide parity for all. They really are doing a tremendous job in supporting the children and providing continuity for their learning too. I am very proud of the fantastic efforts of all staff in ensuring learning takes place for all, whether at home or at school.

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I would also like to say a huge thank you to you, our parents and carers, who are supporting the learning and education of your children. I know this is not an easy task for many, but hopefully the way we have planned the learning opportunities you are able to access them at a suitable time to you. The teachers have fed back that their regular communications with yourselves are a great opportunity to catch up and find out how things are going. Please use this opportunity to discuss any issues you may have or continue to give very positive feedback. Thank you especially to the parents and carers of the Nursery and Reception children who have gone through a very steep learning curve when we had to switch from Tapestry to Seesaw as our platform for learning, all things considered this appears to have gone very smoothly.

Our current situation will continue until at least half term from the information we have been led to believe. Our initial teething problems appear to be settling more and everyone seems to be getting into the swing of this approach to learning.

We have been very fortunate in our partner Junior school supporting us with access to laptops, which as from this week we will be prioritising to send out to families to help support further learning at home. As an Infant school we are deemed not eligible for access to the Government scheme as our children are younger than Year 3, however we are still expected to provide remote home learning. My thanks go to Mrs Farrell, Headteacher of Hamstel Junior School, in working so closely with us to support our families too. We have been successful in applying to a charity based in Basildon who have donated 5 laptops and an Ipad from Fords at Dagenham, a huge thank you goes to them too for their kindness in supporting our plea. It has been quite humbling to know we are so respected and there are so many who wish to support us.

For these first weeks the Government had stopped delivery of the free fruit and vegetable scheme, as well as our free school milk allocation. We put out pleas to local supermarkets and today we received bags of food from our local Waitrose Store who responded to our plight to enable us to provide breakfast foods, fruit and snacks for the children during the day.

We are truly blessed that the very good working relationships with our partner local schools and community is so strong that they have respected and recognised our difficulties in supporting our families by going that extra mile to support us in being able to provide what we can.

These continue to be very challenging times, but by working together and supporting one another we can pull through and achieve.

I do wish you all continue to be well and hope that you remain safe.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Clark', with a small dot at the end.

Lisa Clark
Headteacher