



Hamp Nursery & Infants' School
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Dear Parents/Carers

I want to start by saying to you all "Well done!" We have made it to the end of what has been probably the hardest six weeks of school life ever, for you and for us. When the first lockdown came last March, none of us really knew what was expected for home schooling. We, like most of you thought this would be the only lockdown and when schools re-opened in June for Reception and Year One pupils, we thought we were all heading in the right direction and life was getting back to normal. We never expected that there would be two more national lockdowns to come.

In November/December for the second lockdown schools remained fully open, but we were told to be prepared to deliver remote learning in the case of bubble closures or another full lockdown. So, we weren't really surprised when after Christmas we were told not to fully re-open and, this time, we were ready. We were able to deliver books and stationary, to begin to use Google Classroom and to continue to deliver "learning from home".

This has taken a great deal of effort and hard work from staff. Most of us have had to learn new technological skills, very quickly. Teachers have had to spend much more time than usual planning to be able to provide daily plans with more detail and explanation than usual, plans that you can support at home without the ready resources we have here. They have spent extra time every day, on top of teaching in school, responding to all your posts. The admin staff have become IT technicians, supporting both us and you, and on top of all that we have all become cleaners. We are all cleaning everything that is touched – constantly all day to keep everyone safe. I am very proud to be able to say that all staff here have worked "above and beyond" for your children.

However, we do know that we have not been the ones having to do the actual delivery of home learning, and although we might have been ready - this is our day job which we all love - this was a challenge for some of you at home. We are getting the plans for lessons to you, but you, as parents and carers have had to do the actual delivery and teaching of the lessons. Home-schooling had suddenly become quite real. Many of you have children of different ages, from teenagers to toddlers and the sudden need to provide quiet calm spaces for older children's online learning, to be technological wizards, experts in several curriculum areas, early years specialists, to provide all sorts of resources and entertaining engaging activities, to keep one child engaged and quiet whilst the other is doing music or PE, whilst at the same time still being mum or dad, running a household and getting tea on the table will have been exhausting and almost impossible.

As a whole staff here, we would like to say well done to you all. Well done if you managed it all. Well done if you did all the lessons we posted. Well done if you did some of the lessons. Well done if you did some of your own. Well done if you did none but you held it all together. We know that you will have done the very best you can for your children.

Next week is half-term. I am quite sure we will all enjoy a week off; a week without the pressure of having to worry about school. Hopefully, on the Monday after half-term the Government will announce their plans for re-opening and if it is to be the 8th of March this will only mean two more weeks of home-learning for you.

There has been some discussion that this may be a phased re-opening for schools but we would expect infant children to be among the first to return, so we are already planning and preparing for this to happen. It is likely that the staggered bubble times will continue but I will write to you again once we know more.

In the meantime, we know thinking about coming back to school will gain mixed reactions from both parents and children. We all know the virus is still very real so there will be anxieties for you and the children around that, but also, for many children coming back will be like the first day in September all over again. Our children are very young and have had quite an interrupted school life so far. Our Reception children missed a good chunk of their Nursery time, the Year Ones missed a good chunk of their Reception Year and the Year Twos who are more experienced in the routine and expectations of school have missed a good chunk too.

In order to try to make this as smooth and supportive as possible for the children, we would recommend that you treat the 8th March (if that is confirmed as the return date) as you would a September start day. Start telling the children they will be coming back to school to see all their friends. Make sure they are going to bed early on a school night and getting up in time to be dressed and ready for the day. Practise the important independent skills they will need for school, dressing and undressing for PE, zipping up their coats and getting their gloves on, self-toileting skills, using a tissue for a runny nose, independent hand-washing and particularly drying properly, using a knife and fork themselves to cut up their lunch, and most importantly, asking when they need some help. It might help to prepare uniform and get shoes ready. Let them see that it is ready and will be happening soon. Keep logging into Google classroom and trying to do some of the day's activities.

We will help by doing a daily live registration session. Every morning at 9.15 the class teacher will enable the link for you to join the live chat. I would recommend that you do this for the two weeks - this will help with routine and hopefully help to get children excited about coming back to school. Don't worry if children are shy at first and don't want to speak to us, we are used to this. We do ask you to mute your microphones and unmute when we ask you to as we will speak to children individually. There is no expectation that parents talk to us but we are quite happy if you are there supporting your child.

When the children do come back we are asking that you return all the exercise books so that children can share their work with us. We have seen many things on Google Classroom, but we will take the time to go through the children's books with them, to praise their efforts and to "value" their hard work, so please tell them that we will be doing that. You can tell them they will all get a sticker or certificate when they come back and show us what they have been doing.

Finally, just to let you know we have now had our third bubble closure. Compared to most local schools this is still relatively very few. Our strict social distancing and bubble rules are helping to keep us all safe, so although we know some of you find this very difficult, we thank you for your continued co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Mary Weatherburn
Headteacher