



Winchelsea News

All Individuals Matter

February Newsletter

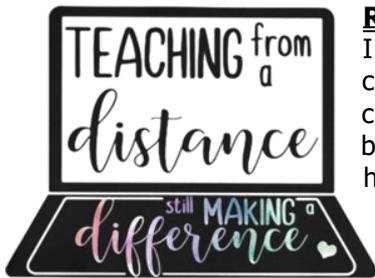
Thank you



Thank you for your continued support with the arrangements that school has put in place to try to manage the risks associated with Covid-19. The blended learning being offered to pupils, whether at home or at school, is firmly in place and we are grateful to parents for working with us and being understanding of some of the difficulties this can sometimes present. Thank you also for the many messages, emails and conversations at the school gate that have shown your appreciation for all that we are doing at Winchelsea. It is these kind words that make it all worthwhile!

Please could I ask that parents who have children in school continue to try to arrive promptly at the designated times and also leave promptly to avoid congestion and to minimise the numbers waiting in close proximity. I try to open gates promptly with the hope that dispersal from the school grounds can be as quick as possible. In the wintry weather I am sure we all want to be at the gates for as little time as possible! This is in place to minimise contact and keep everyone as safe as possible. **The wearing of face coverings is also appreciated at this time to help reduce the possibility of virus transmission.**

When we first re-opened school in September I sent out a risk assessment to all parents and promised that this would be reviewed each half term. A second review took place before Christmas but, obviously, this was then overshadowed by the changes brought about through National Lockdown. Two more documents are now available on the school website – a Remote Learning policy and Remote Education plan are both published and explain how we are complying with government directives and the expectations required of staff, parents and pupils at this time.



Remote learning

I hope that parents and pupils are settling into a new routine in regards to remote learning and children working from home. I know it is an exceptionally difficult time and this way of working is challenging for us all. Please understand that teachers are working within the directives set out by the Department for Education which instructs us to provide work which is expected to take 4 hours for Key Stage 2 children and 3 hours for Key Stage 1 every day. The expectation is that the children should be receiving and completing the same work whether they are in school or at home and that the work covers all aspects of the National Curriculum which would be delivered if schools were fully open as normal. There is also an expectation that teachers

should assess the progress of the children in their class and therefore they need to maintain communication with those children at home. Everyone is working hard, both in school and at home, and there is a real Winchelsea spirit of teamwork. It is challenging for everyone – staff are working extremely hard and overcoming many difficulties with technology and I know they are doing their best to try to accommodate all the different needs that can be unique to every child's own home circumstances. Please keep in touch with your child's class teacher, let them know how you are getting on and provide them with examples of your child's work. This is a requirement from the government directives which expect teachers to be able to monitor your child's progress and give feedback to the children to help them improve. If you are having problems they are there to help.

Devices and donations

I have been overwhelmed by the offers of support from the local community in regards to helping families where access to a suitable device is impacting on their ability to access or engage with remote learning. We have been given a number of laptops, printers and tablets which we have managed to refurbish and offer out to our pupils. Some members of the local community who do not have devices to give have made financial donations to the school so that we have been able to purchase equipment and I am extremely grateful to everyone who has helped. I know that the children at home and their families will benefit greatly and appreciate the kindness of others. We have also received 50 SIM cards from Vodafone to help families where the limitations of internet access can be a problem and these are available to help so please contact the school office if you would like one to help with remote learning.



Confirmation of half term closure

The Department of Education have confirmed that there will be no expectation for schools to remain open to key workers over the upcoming half term break. Therefore there will be no provision for key worker children in school that week and teachers will not be providing remote learning. This will give everyone the chance to have a break and return refreshed and ready to tackle the next half term. We are yet to have any confirmation about the further re-opening of school in the future and therefore, until further notice, we will continue to operate the systems that we have put in place for the foreseeable future. Boris Johnson has confirmed that schools will certainly not re-open fully before March 8th at the earliest.

Staff Lateral Flow Testing

You may be aware from the press and media coverage that staff in primary schools are now being offered the opportunity to carry out self-testing for Covid19 in a national initiative to try to reduce the risks of transmission of the virus and to control and contain those in the community who may be positive but asymptomatic.

Winchelsea has received a delivery of enough test kits for all staff in school which includes teachers, support staff, office staff, midday supervisors and site/ cleaning staff. Staff are not compelled to participate but at Winchelsea everyone currently has agreed to take part in order to help the national efforts to bring this virus under control.

This may have an inevitable impact on our ability to continue to provide all aspects of our remote learning and therefore I am writing to you in order to prepare you for the possibility of 'disruption to services' which may be inevitable. This is particularly relevant for those parents who are key workers and rely on their children being in school in order to continue their own work.

Staff at Winchelsea will be self-testing twice a week on a Sunday and a Wednesday evening/Thursday morning. Should a member of staff gain a positive reading they will inform school and as a consequence it will be necessary to close their class 'bubble' due to direct contact, along with other staff who work within the same bubble. The member of staff with the positive reading will be instructed to seek a PCR test at a local test centre and during that period of time all close contacts i.e. pupils and linked staff, will need to self-isolate until the test results are received. There is no need for the close contacts to seek a test unless they show signs of symptoms. Once the member of staff has received their result the bubble will either re-open (if the test proves negative) or continue to be closed and the length of that closure will be instructed by Public Health England which is where school has to report to. In the case of a bubble closure the associated staff will continue to provide remote learning from home wherever possible but this may be limited by their own access to resources and technology at home. Understandably this will not be possible if the member of staff is too unwell to work.

I appreciate that this may cause some inconvenience to key workers when bubbles are closed and may also cause some disruption to remote learning but we hope you appreciate the difficult circumstances in which we are working and that we must do our best to help our community to stay safe and to reduce the transmission of this virus so that we can all return to a better way of life as soon as possible.

The key times linked to the testing schedule suggest that Monday morning and Thursday morning each week could be a flashpoint for possible disruption to pupils' attendance in school and we urge parents to monitor their emails as we will inform you as soon as possible regarding school bubble closure and by 8.15am at the latest.

Key Worker provision

Last week we experienced our first bubble closure at Winchelsea. This was unsettling for everyone involved and reminded us just how susceptible we all still are to the transmission of this virus. Whilst we are always committed to helping our parents who are key workers by providing places in school for their children I would like to also ask for us to work together to try to keep everyone as safe as possible. It stands to reason that we have in school the children of families who are at the highest risk of coming into contact with the virus due to the occupations of their parents who, as key workers, have jobs which place them on the frontline and directly in contact with members of the public. Whilst the government has required schools to allow children of key workers to attend school they have also made it clear in their directives that **'where children can stay at home they should do so'**. Numbers requesting provision are rising in all classes and our ability to ensure the health and safety of everyone in our school building becomes harder despite our rigorous and thorough risk assessment and procedures which have kept us all safe for such a long time since re-opening in September. I am trying hard not to limit spaces for those eligible to request them but, in consultation with my governing body, this is continually being reviewed and therefore we seek your help in this matter and hope you will only take up school places if there is no other option available to you in an effort to keep your child as safe from the risk as possible.

Dates to the end of this term

February 15th – 19th: Half term

March 19th: Red Nose Day

March 22nd: Class photographs (subject to school re-opening)

March 31st: Term ends (Please note this is a Wednesday)

Summer Term: Monday 19th April 2021– Friday 28th May 2021
Monday 7th June 2021 – Wednesday 21st July 2021

School website and Twitter

Our school website is designed not only to promote the school in the wider community and give information to parents who are selecting a school for their children, but also to provide information for you. All newsletters sent out from school are published on our website as well as many other subsidiary letters. You will also find photographs and information about what has been happening in your child's class, details of school documentation and policies and other news from clubs or events. You can find us at: **www.winchelsea.lincs.sch.uk** I am also regularly tweeting! I can be followed at **@Winchelsea1**. Despite this difficult situation nationally we are keeping spirits up and still smiling! Who knows what the future may hold and there is an awful lot of uncertainty for everyone but one thing I am sure of is that Winchelsea school will rise to whatever challenges we need to face and will always endeavour to do our best for everyone we work with.

Once again, I hope the information in this newsletter has been helpful.

Miss Helen Duckett Head Teacher