

HeadTeacher: Mrs C Oldham

INSPIRE. ASPIRE. ACHIEVE.

Dear Parents and carers,

As we near the end of this Autumn term, it felt right to write to you all to express my gratitude on behalf of myself and all of the staff for your on-going support and co-operation as we continue to navigate through each day of these difficult times. I do recognise that in my decision making I am never going to please every viewpoint all of the time! I am so very proud of our whole school community and what we have been able to achieve during this first term. Our children are healthy, happy and making amazing progress in all areas of our learning. Our staff are so committed and have continued to work so relentlessly hard throughout.

As per my previous email, the Department for Education have sent out some further guidance on a number of matters which have required some fairly rapid decision making. I have continued to make decisions based on providing the best education possible - in the safest way possible.

End of Term Arrangements

On Tuesday evening we received guidance from the Department for Education regarding end of term arrangements. After previously stating that schools would not be allowed to amend their terms dates in any way possible – they have now decided that Friday the 18th December can be a closure day for students and a professional development day for school staff. It is slightly unclear whether this is a recommendation or a flexibility and ultimate decisions have been left with Headteachers.

As you are aware, we have taken the decision to close the school to all children on the 18th December 2020 and the final day of term will now be Thursday 17th December 2020.

There are a number of reasons why I believe that this is the correct decision for our School.

- Schools are expected to undertake contact tracing (more information below) for 6 days following the end of term. This avoids the need for school staff to work on Christmas eve, or for families to worry about contact from school on Christmas Eve regarding potential coronavirus exposure.
- There is the potential for a substantially reduced workforce if we were to open as usual on the 18th December. Many staff have young children and their own children's schools may close on the 18th December, leading to a need for childcare and absence from our School.
- I know that many parents are also worried about potential exposure to Covid-19 prior to Christmas and meeting with family members, this closure does allow an additional day of no contact in advance of Christmas.

Furthermore, schools have been advised that they will need to make up this day for children to attend before the end of this academic year. Therefore, our children will be expected to attend school on **Monday 19th July 2021**. This will be their last day before breaking up for the summer holidays. We already have firm plans in place for our training day in January, hence why we aren't able to use this day as an extra day for the children to attend.

I apologise for having to inform you of this at such short notice and I do understand there may be some inconvenience for some families. I share the frustration at constantly shifting positions from the Department for Education, but I also recognise that, as for all of us, behind the institution, there are good people trying to do their best in impossible circumstances.

Contact Tracing over the Christmas Holidays

As parents will be aware, schools have taken on the role of contact tracing and issuing isolation advice in the event of a positive test result for a member of the school community. The Government have made it clear that this is a service they expect schools to continue provide until the 6th day after children last attend the school (hence the suggestion of closing to students on the 18th December.) We will of course be supporting the NHS and our school community and will continue to fulfil this service as we have done throughout. Therefore up to and including the 23rd December 2020, If you need to report a positive coronavirus test result for a child at Cogenhoe, please do ensure that the **entire household** is isolating and contact us via email at admin@cogenhoeprimary.org providing the following information:

Date the child was last in school:

Date that coronavirus symptoms began:

Date of the Covid-19 test:

Date the positive test result was received:

I will then be in touch to advise on next steps and begin the contact tracing process. If we need to contact families with advice to self-isolate, I will do so via email/ text and will also try to call, but this may not be possible in all circumstances.

The Government's advice on contacting schools during the Christmas break is:

- Where a child or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.
- For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a child or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.

Coronavirus Preventative Measures

I know that we all want to ensure that we are able to spend Christmas with our family and friends this year. Staff will continue to talk to children about the importance of following all relevant safety measures with particular care in the final days of term. I would be grateful for your support in re-enforcing this message at home and also ensuring that all restrictions and protections are followed outside of school. If we are all able to do this effectively, we will reduce the risk of transmission.

I would also be grateful if parents could be cautious when making judgements on their child's suitability to attend school and ensuring that if they have any of the covid-19 symptoms, that they self isolate and book a test. The 3 symptoms are a high temperature, a continuous cough and a loss or change of taste /smell. Please note that the temperature does not need to be diagnosed with a thermometer, the NHS advice is that this can just be feeling hot or hot to the touch.

What to do if you are worried about Covid-19

As the pandemic wears on, we know that there are more and more individuals coping with living in a heightened state of anxiety. This can affect children, parents and staff alike. If you do find yourself negatively affected by anxiety about the pandemic and the safety of yourself and those that you love, please do be aware that there is support available. The NHS have a dedicated website <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/> which contains helpful advice on how to manage these feelings and links towards further support.

I will write again briefly on Friday to conclude the 2020 Autumn Term with all hopes for a far more positive 2021!

Have a restful weekend.

Kindest regards, Mrs Charley Oldham - Headteacher



Confidence, Courtesy, Courage, Curiosity, Compassion, PRIDE

