



5th January 2021

Dear Families

Welcome back to Honywood for the Spring term and happy new year to you all. It's that feeling of *deja vu*; that sense we have been here before - the same, but different. I am sure you will all be left with a range of emotions and questions in the wake of last night's announcement and the chaos of the decision making process over the last two weeks. It has certainly been an eventful Christmas break.

For now we will be continuing our week as planned and communicated to you previously our existing plans cater for this eventuality. I shall be meeting with the leadership team today to digest the implications for the term ahead and will be communicating any key info out to you as it emerges over the next few days.

In a way I am glad that this decision has been made. Whilst I have firmly wanted to keep children in school as much as possible, balancing the safety of everyone is a difficult task and one that has become increasingly difficult to manage within the context of the current backdrop. Cases have certainly been rapidly growing in the area over the last two weeks.

I thank you for your continued support and am confident that you are up for this new challenge. I can't think of a more supportive community to work with through this pandemic.

The national testing programme that has attracted a lot of controversy over the holiday will obviously be on hold for the time being. However, I think it is a great opportunity for us to set this up on a small scale and test out how it works. My intention is to look to organise this as soon as possible so that we are in a position to offer staff and key worker children a weekly test. The aim of this is to give us more peace of mind for those coming into school and to iron out any difficulties before we are tasked with scaling this up.

Our learning reviews are taking place today. In light of the current circumstances some of our staff will be conducting these from home. Don't worry if there are any technical issues - we will be following up with families that have difficulties accessing their reviews and will reschedule appointments should we need to. Parents may have some questions regarding the lockdown, remote learning or indeed exams for C11s. As learning review time is limited it is important to keep the focus on the review and the progress that individual learners are making. If you have any urgent queries please contact the school office. We shall be communicating with you over the next couple of days and will be covering the topics of remote learning expectations and C11 exams. Here are a couple of brief notes to address any initial questions.

Remote learning. This week we will be continuing with on-line learning as communicated to you previously. From Monday this remote learning will continue for learners in **all cohorts** (apart from children of keyworkers who have booked a place to come in to school) and we will put more emphasis on the personal connection online - this does not necessarily mean live teaching but it does mean that there will be more human contact than our previous model. We shall be sending guidance out this week regarding using pre recorded material (video or audio) and/or live lessons, how we will approach feedback and assessment and our expectations of learners. Please be patient with us as we establish these new routines. Teachers get quite a bashing about home learning. What I can tell you is that they 100% prefer teaching in class and that delivering a class online takes an awful lot more time and work. It took me most of yesterday to convert my first lesson to be delivered online.

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C11 exams. Currently there is little info regarding this. From looking at the choice of language used by the government it is clear that exams are not being ruled out so I doubt that we will go to a CAGs system like last year. I expect there to be some sort of assessment which may be a modified exam. Learners cannot afford to take their foot off as everything they do will count. We shall communicate any information about exams as and when we receive it.

We will be welcoming in our key worker children tomorrow. Thank you to those families who have completed the form to book a place for this provision. Everyone who has booked a place using the form will receive their place. We shall be making contact this afternoon to confirm timings and expectations.

In the meantime thank you for your support. We approach this lockdown with much more understanding of the challenges we face.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'James Saunders', written in a cursive style.

James Saunders