



Billingshurst Primary School
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Learning and the return to school 8th March

Dear Parents and Carers

We are really looking forward to the children returning to school on Monday and I hope that you and your children are enjoying all the videos for World Book Day. I sent the link in the email to you earlier this week.

Firstly a huge well done for all you have managed to do at home and all the work you have sent in, whether it be lots or some; we have all appreciated seeing what you have been doing and being able to respond to your child's efforts. I know that this has been a challenging time for families and we are all pleased that we can have all the children back in school on Monday. I have sent the letter last week on the basic practicalities of how we will manage the children in school to keep our community safe. This letter is about the children's learning and what we will be focusing on in the next weeks and months.

I know that each child's experience of lockdown will have been different, with their own challenges and successes. Getting the children back into school is important on so many levels, for their education but also for their friendships, well-being and confidence. Some children may be a little unsettled at getting back into the routine to return to school. It may take some a little more time than others to get used to this. Just take your time and understand that it will not take long before we are back to a normality that is familiar as we all settle back into the routine, and enjoyment, of school.

Our approach to learning in the next few weeks is to focus on relationships, the enjoyment of learning and delivering the full curriculum to help each child build on what they did in the autumn term and in lockdown. We plan to launch the curriculum with enjoyable activities that enthuse the children. There will be no formal testing to 'find the gaps'. Instead we are planning activities and assessments that will identify strengths and areas to target. We will then adapt our curriculum to meet those needs. We have three and a half weeks before Easter to undertake this to then redesign and refocus, as needed, the summer term curriculum and to target support for individual children. We will continue with our Flexible Fridays as this provides such an opportunity for the children to gain confidence and independence in their learning.

We will be using the work you have sent in to help inform this assessment as it is a valuable insight into the children's learning but no child will be disadvantaged because they have not sent as much work in. We will look at what they have done alongside what they are doing in school. I avoid the phrase 'catch up' because it indicates that the children have lost something. They may have made less progress in some areas compared to being in school but I strongly believe that they will have also gained skills that are valuable in learning and life. Obviously being in school is the best thing for each child but we



want to take as positive an approach as possible to their experience in lockdown and their return to school. We believe strongly that this is the bedrock that will enable each child to make rapid progress.

The curriculum will not be narrowed. We will teach all the subjects as they are all of value. Within each subject we will highlight the opportunities to advance basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. It would be easy to focus on a 'catch up' curriculum in maths and English that attempted to cover what was missed before embracing the full curriculum but I know this would turn the majority of children off their learning, reduce their progress over time and be likely not to achieve what was intended because of this approach. Attitudes to learning are vital to success and we know teaching a full curriculum with art, music, sports is vital.

We may use past test papers, particularly in Year 6, but in extract form and within the lesson format. If we sit the children to a full past paper on their return, all we will know is that they will not do as well as they might have done without lockdown or will be able to having had sustained time back in school. In Year 6 we may use a full paper later in the summer term to help provide additional information on where they are in terms of Year 6 outcomes but, even then, it will only be an indicator. National tests have been cancelled this year and the children's 'results' in any such test will not be reported.

Parents' consultations will not take place this term as most children have not been in school and we would be consulting you! Instead we intend to hold them in the summer term. These will still probably be remotely but we will have a new video format that will be easy to manage and accessible to all. I will send more information about this after Easter.

So we all look forward to Monday. Enjoy World Book Day and send in your pictures of your child reading their favourite book, in their favourite place and wearing their favourite clothes for reading! In the meantime enjoy the spring weather and if you have any specific questions or concerns, do email your teacher this week or contact me via the school office email.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williamson
Headteacher

