

04/09/2020

## Newsletter September 2020

A very big Hello to everyone and welcome back to Acorns Primary School. Whilst the pandemic is still a big part of our lives, we are slowly returning to normal.

A HUGE thank you goes to Acorns staff who have kept in touch with families, made virtual learning interesting, provided real activities for children who needed them and undertook teaching roles in school under very stressful circumstances. I would also like to thank and acknowledge Sir Tom Finney High School for sharing their buildings with us during holiday periods so that we could carry out essential maintenance.

School has now opened to all but the very medically vulnerable and we sincerely hope that we see all our pupils as soon as possible.

Some of our youngest pupils are phasing their entry in to school. For these very young children, this is a big step. You can help prepare your youngsters by talking to them about school, looking at the photographs of their class team and understanding that any anxieties about going to school will soon pass. Our school is an interesting and exciting place to be and our pupils like coming to school.

We have taken lots of precautions to keep your child safe. We are following very recent government advice by wearing masks in communal areas. You will read about the strategies we are employing to keep everyone safe later in this newsletter.

### Staff

We are THRILLED to welcome Hannah Parkinson (teacher in Pine class) and Catherine Grilli (teacher in Willow class). Hannah has had a great deal of teaching experience and specialises in teaching pupils with communication needs, Catherine has many years' experience in the education of the deaf and also specialises in teaching children with multi-sensory needs. They have both got off to a flying start in Key Stage Two with children clearly enjoying themselves from day 1.

### Our Curriculum

Janet Phillips known throughout Lancashire for her wonderful sensory dramas is now also going to be delivering forest school activities to all of our pupils. We will be using our forest school area to deliver outdoor lessons to all pupils. They will be engaging in activities designed to promote a love of the great outdoors, working together and promoting wellbeing. What we have learnt during lockdown is that access to outside spaces has such a positive impact on everyone's mental health and that we should capitalise on the wilderness on our doorstep! Please remember to send in wellingtons, roomy waterproof jackets, trousers and hats/ gloves.

Headteacher Gail Beaton B.Ed.

Many children may be feeling anxious right now, our initial aim is to re-establish relationships and encourage focus so that we can learn and find out what the children know right now. This is called baselining. The staff will be making assessments of a child's abilities all the time so that we can plan to re-engage children with more formal learning activities.

### **School Visits**

Our pupils need to access outdoor open spaces. This is a safe way to begin to use the local community, using our thoroughly cleaned and sanitised buses. Visits are planned well, avoiding large crowds and making sure that we are able to maintain social distancing whilst enjoying being outside. Staff will not wear masks but will maintain hand washing and hand sanitising throughout the visit. As the restrictions ease and the pandemic subsides, we will discuss how we can develop our visits to include indoor spaces.

### **School Buildings And Security**

We installed CCTV over the holidays and have applied for planning permission to install a perimeter fence. Our aim is to prevent damage and stop trespassers. We regularly have to repair the roof after vandals get onto it and damage the tiles. This also leads to mini floods around school, this impacts on electrical safety and inevitably affects teaching and learning.

Improving fencing and access to specific parts of the play areas has also helped us zone the school so that bubbles remain intact and therefore it is safer for everyone.

### **School Transport, Dropping Off And Picking Up Children**

You will by now be aware that each pupil is in a bubble. This is to limit close contact with a greater number of pupils, to assist with track and trace and to promote a sustainably healthy school.

This is a long-term plan, continuing until the pandemic ends.

SEND transport will go ahead as usual and will park in our rear car park. Each bus will be met by members of staff from the appropriate bubble and pupils will be taken a few a time to their classroom. This will take longer than usual. The Acorns staff team will make a dynamic risk assessment, based on needs, as to which order children are helped to their classroom.

At the front of school, we need to avoid larger groups of adults, congregating in a small area - hence the staggered start and finish times. The actual school day in terms of teaching time, remains the same.

I understand that for some parents this is tricky, however this system has been recommended by our local authority and it's designed for safety and to help schools stay open. We must all follow the plan to keep safe and COVID free.

### **Talking To Class Staff**

Previously, parents and carers have been able to chat to staff at the beginning and end of the day. Because of the rigidity of the staggered start times and the necessity to remain in bubbles this isn't possible right now. However please e-mail your child's teacher, ask for a telephone call, or make use of your talking tile to exchange information. We really like talking to you all but at the moment this is the best we can offer under the circumstances.

### **Annual Reviews**

These are statutory and we are required by law to submit the paperwork that evaluates how your child is making progress.

We understand if you don't want to come in to school - when you receive your invitation please ask if you would like a virtual meeting to go ahead.

If you wish to attend in person please bring a mask and do not attend if you are ill, have any symptoms of COVID or you are living in a household with someone who is suspected of, or has been diagnosed with COVID.

If you wish to express your views during a telephone conversation this is entirely possible and we will comment that your views were noted and that you were 'present'.

### **Attending Health Appointments**

You will be asked to sign in and then exit the building and re-enter the school using the fire exit outside of the nurses room. There you can wait briefly before attending the clinic. Please bring a mask with you and as before do not come to the meeting if you feel unwell or are residing with someone who feels unwell.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [head@acorns.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:head@acorns.lancs.sch.uk) or phone 01772 792681 if you wish to discuss anything in this newsletter further.

This is going to be my last term at Acorns Primary School and I want everyone to remain healthy mentally and physically, enjoying school and making progress. You have an enormous part to play in



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this and together we can achieve ANYTHING.

Gail Beaton.