

School Update

Dear Parents and Friends of Castle Hill,

As another week draws to a close we reflect on the staggering 693 pieces of education guidance sent out this week! As you are doubtless hearing in the press, school planning is changing on a daily basis. We are delighted to report that we have increased the number of Pods from 4 at the start of lockdown, to 16 on Monday 1st June and from Monday 22nd June we have managed to organise a further 4 Pods taking the total to 20. This has taken a huge amount of furniture shifting and creative storage, along with very flexible team deployment. It has also required a large amount of communication, planning and organisation. We hope the message we are giving to you is clear, we want our children in and, where possible, we are making this happen. One area of government advice remains unchanged, we have to prioritise our provision for our vulnerable pupils and pupils of critical workers and then the focus year groups (R, 1 and 6). Our total on roll for both sites is 506 pupils, and we now have 152 (30%) in school across both sites with 354 working remotely; huge thanks for your patience, understanding and support. Please rest assured we are being as creative as possible to get the maximum number of children in safely. All 8 classrooms at Greenbank will be occupied by Pods and of the 15 classrooms at Rooksdown, all but two contain Pods.

The need to expand Pod numbers to accommodate our critical worker pupils has led us to review the current staffed model. We have, therefore, made changes to *some* of the Pod leaders which ensures, where possible, teachers are now teaching their current year group. This will allow on-site and remote learning to be more effectively delivered. If your child's Pod Leader has changed you will receive an email later today with the name of the new Pod leader which is effective from Monday 22nd June.

All unused areas of space on both sites are being utilised for furniture storage. There is now a critical lack of space and a creatively stretched staffing model. Throughout this entire challenging chapter, our policy has been to be open and transparent about the difficulties we have faced and the solutions we have created, as you will see from the videos on the website.

We are extremely proud that we have been able to stay open for the full five days a week but we restate that Friday afternoon, when the formal teaching stops on Dojo, is time that is vital for teacher planning, liaison and deep cleaning routines. Thank you again for your support.

We are actively looking ahead to the end of term when transition and farewells usually take place and, even in the current climate, we feel a transition week is important for all the children. With this in mind, it is possible, indeed probable, that during the final two weeks of term formal Dojo learning will cease and project type activities will be set. This will free up teaching staff from their laptops and allow them to be on site to say farewell to their old class and meet their new pupils. We think this is important for all the children those in school and those remote learning - more details to follow. We will obviously adhere to government guidance with respect to social distancing and group sizes.

Some traditions have not been allowed to slip and, thanks to our virtual Sports Week, we can bring you breaking news! After a tight competition, the Blues are the winners. Congratulations to one and all and thanks for taking part both in and outside of school.

Finally, all that is left is to wish you a lovely, restful weekend.

Mr John DF Martin and The Castle Hill Team