



17th September 2021

Notes from the kitchen table

(It's too cold in the attic)

Dear Parents & Carers.

I hope that you are all safe, well and coping with the third lockdown.

At my house we are all key workers and have no small children so most of us are going off to work still which is all we can do of course, other than a weekly trip to the super-market. Over the last two weeks, I have been trying to battle the Christmas flab and to take some sort of exercise – what can I say... it's just a good job that we can wear large jumpers at present!

Like me I expect many of you have a partner on a work call somewhere in the house, much of the time. On Wednesday evening I'll be online myself for an evening *coffee and catch up* with anyone who fancies checking in at 6.30pm. (For those of you unable to come along to our virtual coffee morning on Wednesday morning).

At home we are making the best of things as I'm sure you all are too. I have family members in Yorkshire with Covid at present and check in regularly to see how they are progressing, I have two sons one local and one in London and like everyone else I haven't been able to hug them for far too long. For Christmas, my daughter gave me a lovely photo of me hugging two of my children and at present it is my most treasured possession and I see it every time I go into my bedroom and remember that we will be together again. I am sure that you all have your own challenges and sadness around being able to see loved ones at present and I really do sympathise. I just hope that we can all keep ourselves and everybody around us safe and well until this virus begins to fade away. At least we are beginning to hear of people we know, having vaccines now, something that was only an idea last spring. I really do believe that there will be a turn for the better in the months ahead. Meanwhile, I would like you to know that as a school we are here for you. We are working to do everything that we possibly can to support you and your children with their schooling and with coping with the emotions and changes that everyone is facing. I hope that you feel a part of the family of the school and that you all know that we care for your children and for you too.

Thank you! - I'd like to thank you for all the kind comments and messages we have received over the past two weeks. I might have mentioned before that we often keep positive comments in a special book for staff to look at together. It is important that we let the whole team know when families feel that we are getting things right for them. At the same time, we have also received constructive feedback from parents too. It has helped us to build on what we are doing and to shape and develop our blended learning approach and use of IT more effectively. Everyday we learn something new and I think it is important that all of

us celebrate the phenomenal progress we have made in our use of communication technology. Until last summer I hadn't even videoed myself before and certainly hadn't thought of sharing my collective worship or teaching online with others. As to actually teaching online with both children and parents able to view my efforts, again I'd never done that before this term. Please do bear with us as we use a process of trial and error to get the right blend of video, Power point, live streaming and paper- based learning together for your children. We began to prepare for this eventuality on return to school in September and I am so glad that we did and took the time to gradually upskill ourselves in case of another lockdown.

Wrap around care- As you know we have continued to provide some wrap around care for key workers and this will continue as it is so important in helping these families to do their jobs. Although the small numbers of children arriving in Honeywell for early to school club can continue to be looked after on site, we will be moving After School Club down to the village hall and will walk any children in Honeywell to the hall. This is the most practical way to provide staff cover to enable this to continue. There is only a small group of children involved and most have siblings at the hall.

Staffing- This term we have been joined by Mrs Josie Potter who will be running the school office on Thursdays and Fridays once she's settled in and also Miss Jade Hawkins has joined our EYFS team and Mrs Eva Long has begun a new fulltime role as teaching assistant



Jade



Josie

Keeping our numbers down on site- At school we are working to keep the numbers of staff on site down as much as we safely can as part of our Covid precautions. We also wear masks and socially distance in communal areas and continue to carry out hygiene routines to prevent the spread of the virus.

Wellbeing and cake- The wellbeing of all children and our staff is of huge importance at school and we are working together to encourage everyone to speak out and to share any worries or concerns that they have. We want to ensure that everyone can find support if they need it. I hope that you are all able to speak to those around you if you are feeling wobbly and that you can find the help you need. Please know that I am here for you if I can be of any help at all you can always call or email and I will get back to you as quickly as I can.

At present I move between both sites and although there are always qualified teachers in both places, I ensure that I am a visible presence for the children and can offer some sort of normality by being there for them. I share a daily collective worship too which the children have been used to seeing each week and I think that this also helps us to stay connected.

As a staff team we have begun sharing a few silly challenges each week, you may have seen a post last week of some examples of sparkly items of clothing. We have also shared baby photos together, there were some very cute babies amongst us. This week there will be a bit of a baking theme going on and I will post examples of what we get up to. Meanwhile if you and your children are feeling like you would like to join in, why not post some examples of your own culinary creations? For those of us watching our waistlines, perhaps we can share some recipes for some low calorie treats too. I will post something for you with this letter.

Keep in touch and please stay safe and well.

Kind regards,

Sam McCarthy

Sam McCarthy-Patmore
Academy Head
Illesington CE Primary School

