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Houghton Conquest
Lower School

Growing together

Headteacher
Miss C A McCarthy

Value of the Month: Appreciation

12th June 2020

Dear Parent/Carers

RE: Keeping in touch

As part of national social distancing measures to limit the spread of coronavirus, we have had to limit the numbers of children coming back to school, to ensure that pupils and staff attending could do so safely.

Last Tuesday we welcomed back some pupils from Pre-school, Robins and Doves to add to the key worker children already attending. What a pleasure it was to see them!

I am pleased to say that all the robust planning to put protective measures in place to reduce risks have been successful and school has felt a safe and calm place to be. There was a good deal of time spent hand washing and it was great to see children taking ownership over the 'Special Code of Conduct'; adhering to the new routines and expectations wonderfully. The staggered drop off and collection times have worked well, as have the careful timetabling of lunch/playtimes and our utilisation of outside spaces.

Feedback from pupils and staff returning has been very positive. Pupils have enjoyed their return, enjoying social interaction with their friends and learning in a classroom with staff. Several groups of children are not being taught by their usual class teacher and have all adjusted well, continuing to come to school with smiles on their faces.

As well as offering face-to-face provision for those choosing to attend, staff have also supported the remote education of those who have been staying at home. Staff are also providing work for children attending the priority group provision and printing off and distributing work to children who cannot access the work via email. I am sure many of you have already extended your thanks and appreciation to them for their hard work at this difficult time; I am extremely proud of the amazing team at the school.

The Prime Minister, earlier this week, **withdrew** the aspiration of the full wider opening of schools to other year groups before the summer holidays. As a result, we are awaiting further guidance from the government and the local authority with regard to the flexibility we have around any wider school opening.



There is nothing we would want more than to have all of our children back in school and together again; we really are missing you all. We can also imagine that so many of you are ready for the children to come back. However, the safety of everyone in our school community remains our main focus and priority, and due to the uniqueness of our school, we can unfortunately only facilitate a limited amount of pupils, in order to comply with the stringent government guidance.

Currently in each classroom, we can safely space children at a reasonable distances and each pupil has access to allocated toilets and handwashing facilities. Unless scientists announce that it is safe to reduce the distance and extend the class size, it is not feasible at this time for us to extend the year groups. Our other consideration is the availability of staff to attend school as this will have direct impact on the number of children who will be able to attend the school safely.

Please be reassured we are working tirelessly to develop 'feasibility and flexibility' with regards to accepting more pupils from other year groups, in conjunction with our detailed risk assessment. The safety of everyone in our school community remains our main focus and priority. We understand that guidance is likely to be received in the near future, once this is received we will review our position accordingly.

As the situation is evolving daily, and without the above guidance, we cannot promise anything; however our hope is to provide some access to school for our transitioning year 4's towards the very end of the summer term; however, this does dependent on factors out of our control and we will monitor this closely and communicate with you as soon possible.

Staff and pupils in all settings will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their households. A negative test will enable children and young people to get back to school and their parents to get back to work. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect their cohort and staff in their setting.

Sid the Values snake!

Ms Harvey has thought of a wonderful idea to start 'Sid the Values Pebble Snake' outside the front of our school, where you can decorate a pebble and add it along Sid's body to see how long we can make him grow. It is a brilliant idea to welcome all members of our local village community, and those who are not at school currently, to come together in a display of community spirit during these difficult times. Underneath your pebble write a value like love, hope or patience then add it to the snake! Sid's head, designed by the Keyworker children at the school, will appear on **Monday** by the preschool wall, we hope you have fun creating your wonderful designs!



Mrs Browne continues to add more information to the school website under the 'Closure' tab where there is a range of information for you to access. If you need any assistance or further support, please do get in touch and we will try to help.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation during this time.

Sending our warmest wishes to you and your family.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J Heaslip', written in a cursive style.

Miss J Heaslip
Acting Headteacher