

THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

The opening of schools to all pupils has gone very smoothly. Thank you for playing your part in this. Many of the systems and practices we have seen in place the past 12 months remain and will continue into the summer term; some will remain for sometime beyond that. Whilst we have experienced some positive cases of Covid-19 since all children returned, fortunately they have not resulted in the need to close any 'bubbles'.

Attendance is generally good (and above the local average) but it still falls below our usual attendance figures. See the further section on term-time absence for more information but a reminder that attending school is now mandatory again. Following local guidance we will be looking at each absence on a case by case basis after Easter, and if necessary take the proceedings available to us to fine parents without valid reasons for absence.

Pupils have also returned full of vigor to learn. It is great to see that whilst there have been some obvious areas of missed learning, remote learning has worked well to keep children up to speed as much as reasonably possible across the curriculum. We will continue to make sure the children have the right conditions to help them learn, and this includes being in the right state of mind. Each family has had a different experience of Covid and we need a little time to understand this for every child. You are probably aware that all statutory assessments have been dropped again this year. Therefore, the end of key stage assessments will not be carried out and there will be no published data for schools. In the Federation, we know it is important to find out what children can, and cannot do, so we have already and will continue to carry out some forms of assessment to understand this and help shape our curriculum for the next 12 months or so.



As national lockdown measures begin to ease in the coming weeks and months it is crucial that we all continue to do our bit in helping to slow down any spread of the virus. The basic steps of hands, face and space are important as well as being in well-ventilated areas or outdoors. Newham is a very young Borough, 25% below 18 years old and the majority of the adults are below 50 years old. Therefore, whilst the vaccine is rolled out, and uptake is generally very good in the older categories, the vast majority of people in the community will not be receiving their vaccination for a

couple of months yet. This means the risk of community transmission is still greater in Newham compared to other areas.

Ramadan (and Eid) will soon be upon us and as the vast majority of you will be observing this practice and look forward to the celebration it is necessary to follow the regulations. Under the current roadmap, any mixing of households and meeting up indoors is not due to happen before 17 May. Please do stick to the rules for the safety of everyone.



Physical distancing does not mean socially disconnecting



Stay virtually connected with your family & loved ones by phone or video calls this Ramadan



Talk to your family, especially the elderly, who can be depressed or angry by being isolated



Lift the spirit of children, grandparents and other family members by having virtual *iftars*



RAMADAN AND FASTING

Children will return to school after Easter and Ramadan will have started. As ever, we respect the decisions of parents involving their children in the practice of fasting but we need to know that is happening. Every year we let you know that young children are not expected to fast, and if they want to join in then maybe the weekends when they are home would be a good time to do so. Older pupils may feel they are ready to fast, and with your written permission we will support this decision. Each school will inform you of the process for letting the school know what you have to do. A reminder that we will always put the health and safety of children first and may need to intervene if a child is feeling unwell or faint as a result of fasting. Particularly at this time, please be mindful of the challenge to supervise children in bubbles at lunchtime and the impact on arrangements should we have to group children differently.

BREXIT

Whilst having been fully immersed in dealing with the pandemic, in the background the UK leaving the EU has happened and the country continues to transition into BREXIT. **One key aspect of this is for EU citizens to have registered themselves for pre-settlement or settled status by the end of June.** If you have not done this then please do not delay. If you need any help with this process, please get in touch with the school and we will get someone to help you as much as they can in completing your application. Time is running out.

TERM TIME ABSENCE

During lockdown families took the opportunity to go overseas and see family. In many cases, it was not until schools fully re-opened did we know this had happened. The beauty of remote learning is that it can take place anywhere but it has masked this occurrence. It has only been when children did not return that we became aware. The schools take their safeguarding role seriously, technically these children would be classed as Children Missing Education, and thought long and hard how this could have been picked up but it has to be the parents responsibility to let us know.

Travel abroad has not been permitted for many months, unless in an exceptional circumstance, and this past week it became the law not to travel abroad. Later in the year, when this is relaxed, we imagine many people will want to get away as soon as possible. We remind you that term-time absence has to be approved by the school and also only in exceptional circumstances. When allowed, please arrange leave during the holiday period.



RELATIONSHIP, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION (RSHE)

Our consultation on RSHE has taken place over the past 18 months or so. We started with what the statutory curriculum would entail and these were very well attended sessions. This gave an overview of what schools would be teaching under the new framework. We then shared the RSHE Policy with you over the past couple months. You will remember, this was a model policy provided by the Local Authority for schools to adopt having consulted in many forums. Then in the last couple of weeks we have shared some of the resources, texts and materials we plan to use based upon the subject areas we know many of you had concerns about, inviting some parents in to comment. Due to the pandemic we have not been able to gauge the true engagement level in the same way but we appreciate the time you have taken to comment upon these. We have valued these constructive discussions. In the main, these comments have been positive and supportive in helping the Federation shape the documents that went to Governors for approval.

Governors spent a morning recently looking at these materials and texts, seeing your comments, discussing the delivery plan and understanding the units of work. In the evening they viewed a video that will be used to deliver Sex Education and discussing the policy. As a result, the Governors have approved the policy, approved the scheme of work, approved the resources to be used and how the schools will deliver RSHE. The finalised policy, including the scheme of work, will be uploaded to each school's website.

Both schools recognise the current situation has meant that we may not have reached everyone and we certainly will have not been able to share every resource we plan to use across the whole school. Therefore, we are pledging to ensure you have sight of materials each term before the lessons are delivered and we will review and evaluate the first year of implementation, taking into consideration all you may have raised with us. The process has not stopped but we will start delivering the programme in the summer term.



ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS

For school staff this holiday is well welcomed and probably the first since last February that they can enjoy with some certainty that there will be no significant changes they have to implement upon return. It is also due to include some relaxation of restrictions. So whilst many places remain closed, I hope everyone connected to the schools can enjoy some good weather and safe re-connections with family and friends. Enjoy.

Darren Williams, Executive Headteacher



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