



ESHER CHURCH SCHOOL

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23rd February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Return to School and Headteacher Recruitment Update

I hope that you are staying safe and well as the pandemic continues to impact our lives. We have now heard that we will soon be able to welcome all the children back into school and I know that our staff team are looking forward to it as eagerly as all of you. They will be working hard over the next couple of weeks to ensure that the school's risk assessments and Covid control systems meet the necessary requirements and Mrs McLennan will be writing to you in due course to outline arrangements.

When the children return to school, the focus will be twofold: supporting them to settle back into the school routine with resources targeted on any social and emotional issues this tremendous upheaval has created and identifying and rectifying gaps in learning that have resulted from two extended periods of remote education. Both will be a particular challenge for our youngest pupils whose schooling had barely begun before it was interrupted. Mrs Brindley and her EYFS team will be working hard with both pupils and parents to help the children adapt quickly to school life and I am sure that the new EYFS Outdoor Classroom installed last year, will help with this.

From a progress and attainment perspective, all pupils were assessed twice in the autumn term providing progress data, which you will have received at the recent Parents' Evening. Despite lockdown, teachers have remained on track with their rigorous assessment and reporting schedule and further assessments will follow this term to support their understanding of pupils' progress against their learning goals. This will enable them to continue to adapt their teaching provision as required. You may also be aware that there is no requirement to publish statutory assessments or teacher judgements this year (SATS assessments in Year 2 and Year 6, phonics screening for Year 1 and multiplication timetable check in Year 4). However, teachers will complete and moderate internal assessments, in order to establish final judgements for these cohorts and allow them to measure the children's progress throughout each Key Stage.

Meanwhile, as we complete what we sincerely hope will be the last two weeks of home education, I would like to pay tribute to Mrs McLennan and her team who have worked so hard over recent



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weeks to develop our remote learning provision and deliver our enquiry based curriculum to the children in as comprehensive a manner as possible. Whilst the technology has proved challenging on occasions, and many will have struggled with the difficulties inherent in the children being away from the school setting, everyone's efforts have been well rewarded, with a high level of engagement by pupils across all year groups and positive feedback from so many of you. I hope that the children's opportunity to see and interact with their teachers has helped them to feel connected with their peers and the everyday business of school life, as well as continuing their learning in as productive a way as possible.

Finally I want to update you on our Headteacher recruitment process, which is led by a small group of governors, supported by external educational experts and our colleagues at the Diocese of Guildford. The pandemic has impacted this and, given the unexpected closure of schools in January, it has not proved possible to attract enough high quality candidates, meeting our essential criteria, to undertake a robust interview and selection process. We will therefore need to re-advertise the post but given the imminent re-opening of schools and the focus school leaders will rightly have on their pupils as they return, we intend to delay this until the summer term. As a result we have confirmed with Mrs McLennan that she will continue in her role as Acting Headteacher until the end of this academic year. We are immensely grateful to her for doing so at this most unusual of times. Our thanks go also to our Senior Leaders who are doing so much to support her and to the whole school team who have worked together to overcome so many challenges that the current situation has brought. And finally our thanks also go to the parents and carers of the ECS community for all the support you have shown Mrs McLennan and your words of encouragement, which are always so rewarding for the staff team to hear. ECS really is a very special community and I want to thank you all for the part you and your families play in that.

If you would like any further information, or we can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us via our Parent Governors, Allan Phillips and Carl Warner, who can be reached at parent.governors@esherchurchschool.org.uk.

With best wishes

Ben Holmes
Chair of Governors
For and on behalf of ECS Governing Body