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8th January 2021

Dear Parents,

Please don't worry – there will not be a daily letter, but I'm aware communication is key, and I promise to keep the letters as concise and informative as possible!

Firstly, please may I start by **thanking the whole school community this week** for a multitude of things. To the staff for getting learning up for our children so quickly and coming into school to support key worker and vulnerable pupils and trying to contact as many of you as possible, quite simply for being an amazing team; to the ladies in the Office who have worked relentlessly to keep you informed and find out information so that we can support you and to get lots of provision in place to help you all during this time; to you for being so understanding, so prompt in replying to surveys and responding to communications and always being supportive and most importantly to our **amazing Fir Tree pupils** who have once again had to adapt and start a whole a new routine – thank you to you all!

Adapt is certainly the buzz word for now, I think. It is going to take us all some time to adapt to another lockdown. From new routines; to trying to work from home and support our children as best we can; our mindsets and how we function. **We must all take each day as it comes** and try our best and not put pressure on ourselves, because in times like these we can only do what we can do, the most important thing is that we are all fit and well and the spreading of the virus declines. Let's all keep looking at that light at the end of the tunnel.

The plan for this lockdown is to produce a **Friday update** to parents as we did last year. I will also send a video message/weekly round up to the children through TEAMS to give them a short update too and to keep in contact with them. If there are any major developments of course this may change.

We will use our messaging systems as usual. Apologies for the problems on Monday evening – a text was sent at 9:00pm to inform you of an email/letter arriving shortly, with the letter and forms then attempted to be sent at 9.00pm however 'teachers2parents' crashed for most schools and so these never reached you until the early morning. As the DfE guidance came out at 10:53pm that night I think we did well even with the problems encountered!

With the **great team** we have here, we managed to start remote learning Wednesday and accommodate children of key workers from 8.50am. Hopefully any teething problems will be sorted out going forward and routines are quickly established. Teachers will be informing me of engagement they are receiving - **every child is expected to be accessing the work and completing it to the best of their ability and circumstances**. Work will be on the TEAMS each day – and often on the night before. It has been fantastic to see so much engagement already. We will try and support as best we can where there are technology issues within the home.

We have received 3 laptops so far from the DfE and have managed to source a limited number as a Trust, but as you can imagine demand currently outstrips supply. Once we have received more of our allocation, we will be in touch with eligible parents to arrange collection.

In school, we have four bubbles now in operation. **AS Resource; KS1; KS2 and Nursery**, with the latter open for all Nursery pupils as directed by the government. These teams are staffed on a rota system by Teachers and TA's to ensure there is appropriate supervision.

Teachers will not be with bubbles for 3 days a week to allow them to deliver the remote learning effectively, and on the 2 days that they are in the classroom they will be supported by TA's to allow them opportunities to keep the interaction with their classes as best as possible.

Although school is open, our phones are not operational, please be aware that if you need to contact school for anything, please do this through office@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org and we will contact you.

Once again, I'd like to thank everybody for their kind words and support. **Resilience** is a key value within the school - if ever there was a test of this, it is now, but I have every confidence we can once again all rise to the challenge.

On behalf of all the staff please say hi to your child(ren) from us, and of course stay safe. I will be in contact with you all again next Friday. Please try to take some time this weekend to switch off ready for a new week, next week!

Best Wishes



Mrs L Wood

Associate Headteacher