



ELTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

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EXPECT, ENDEAVOUR, EXCEED

FRIENDSHIP

TRUST

JUSTICE

ENDURANCE

COMPASSION

KOINONIA

30th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I'm writing this in the hope that you, your children and your extended family and friends are all safe and healthy. It's obviously been an incredibly difficult two weeks for everyone, and we're all still getting used to our new "normal". As you'd expect, the whole staff team here have been absolutely amazing and are working really hard both at school and at home to ensure you feel supported and still very much part of our community. With the information we have to hand, we anticipate that this will be a marathon rather than a sprint, so have spent time organising things properly in the background, rather than rushing around just to get something "out" to children. I know that you'll know of other schools who've been sending home "stuff"☺ and that every time you turn on the news, or open up a newspaper, you'll see or hear the word "home-schooling", but thank you for your trust in allowing us this time to do things in our own way. We acknowledge and appreciate your patience.

News at school - Staff

We were fortunate from the beginning to have a large number of staff who were willing and able to keep the school open for children. We are working in teams on a 14 day rota so that each team gets chance to completely isolate for the recommended time before returning to work. We will be open for however long is needed to support the children of our keyworkers, including the Easter holidays and Bank Holidays, provided that we have enough healthy staff available.

News at school - Children

We had 7 children on roll last week, averaging around 4 per day. This is slightly over the county average which worked out as 1% on roll in Peterborough and 2% on roll in Cambridgeshire. There is talk of putting schools together as "hubs" but obviously this then opens up our children and staff to more contact with others and consequently, more risk. We will continue to do what we need to do/are told to do unless it puts our children or staff in unnecessary danger. We anticipate that numbers attending will drop for the next couple of weeks, as many families had already made childcare plans for the Easter holidays. However, there is a predicted spike of critical Covid-19 cases in the next few weeks, so if key worker shift patterns change, we could see more numbers of children attending school.

Last week, we were blessed with beautiful weather, so we were able to invite children to bring in scooters and bikes from home to use on the playground. Our days started with Joe Wicks and included story time and the odd educational TV programme but largely, children were left to their own devices (literally and metaphorically) and showed a fantastic practical understanding of 2 metres☺. All children in school, and others beyond, have received a hot, nutritious meal every school day thanks to the amazing Nici in the kitchen.

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Future Plan – how you can help us

I'd like to take this opportunity to explain how we envisage things working over the coming weeks and to summarise our aims and our vision for the foreseeable future. As always, we will be as flexible to your needs, and to those of your child, as we possibly can, but we would ask you please to remember that we all have families too 😊. Amongst our staff team we have members who are themselves vulnerable with medical conditions; have family members who are vulnerable; are family-isolating; have partners working from home; have small pre-schoolers; have partners who are about to become unemployed/go out of business etc. In other words - all the worries you have, we have too. Please bear this in mind over the coming weeks or months if you start to feel frustrated or worried with what we are doing/not doing, because there might be a very good reason behind our actions or inactions; a toddler who's decided to PVA glue the kitchen table, or "help" with the computer for example 😊, or a family member who has fallen ill. As always, we welcome your feedback, so do let us know how you feel and what perhaps would make things better for you – this way of working is most definitely a "work in progress" - but please be kind and understanding in the way you make your feelings known.

Future Plan – a summary

It goes without saying that the situation we find ourselves in is unprecedented. At times like this, it's easy to jump on the bandwagon and go with whatever is the easiest option, rather than with what we believe to be right. Lots of schools have gone down the route of photocopied packs of worksheets, but we do not feel this is useful nor sustainable over time. Most importantly, it is not who we are.

Everything comes back to our ethos - at the centre of our beliefs is that a child who feels safe and happy will be confident and have the capacity to make positive relationships. A child who has positive relationships will learn without the fear of getting things wrong or of being blamed or ridiculed. A child who is allowed to get things wrong and take risks is one who will achieve their full potential, wherever their talent or area of interest lies.

Alongside this is the fact that as parents, you are your child's most important teacher, and you do this every day without "teaching". You know your child better than we ever will. Your main job over the coming weeks and months is to keep them as safe and as happy as you can. As a school, we will try to help you with this and to maintain the positive relationships that we have as a whole-school community; child to child, child to parent, parent to teacher, teacher to child. Below is the "what" and the "how" as a summary; these will be explained in more detail, in subsequent letters.

1. **Our whole school Twitter page** – the content of this page will become the equivalent of our Thursday Parentmail combined with our Friday Celebration Assembly, but delivered throughout the week; a round-up of news from school, reminders, advice, celebrations of birthdays, photographs of achievements etc

What you need to do

- Create a Twitter account (if you haven't already done so).
- Ask to follow us @Reginald_Elton. Make sure your user name identifies you as a parent.
- Tag@Reginald_Elton in any photos you post on your account, so that we can retweet them from the school account. That way, if we are doing "PE with Joe Wicks" at school for example, we can post a photo, and you can share your photos of "PE with Joe Wicks" from home, too.

When will this start? – It already has! If you are struggling to get started, please email Mrs Steenkamp on jsteenkamp@elton.cambs.sch.uk. All the staff have access to the account and will post things regularly.

- 2. Phone calls home** – from the start of the next term, we've devised a rota to keep in contact with you and your child via a good old-fashioned phone-call. Where possible, your child's teacher will phone to speak to you and your child and have a quick catch-up, make sure you're all ok and try to answer any questions you may have, but if they are on school-rota that week, you may well get a different teacher on the phone.

What you need to do

- **Absolutely nothing UNLESS you want to opt out.** It's likely to be around once every two weeks and is intended to be a nice thing, not something intrusive, but if you would like to opt out of this please email Mrs Wass office@elton.cambs.sch.uk using the subject header "opt-out"

When will this start? From Monday 20th April

- 3. Class Facebook page** – this will become your go-to point for activity ideas. Each class teacher will have a page where you can interact as a class; sharing ideas, responding to work, showing photographs, video-clips etc, keeping in touch with each other. This will start on Monday 20th April, and you will receive a letter explaining how to access the page on Thursday 16th/Friday 17th April. Teachers will put up activities weekly, and try to respond to posts regularly (how regularly, will depend on whether they are on school-rota or not, and what the situation is at home). We will also have an extra email address from Monday 20th April, manned by a rota of teachers, homelearning@elton.cambs.sch.uk offering support for a specific issue or question that you may feel needs more personal guidance.

Attached to this email, there is a list of recommended celebrity shows and challenges that you can take part in over the holidays. Perhaps you could have a go at one, tag us into your tweets then we could share your photos with the rest of our Elton community? It would be lovely to get the ball rolling! 😊

Tomorrow, you will receive another letter, outlining our key thoughts and ideas on home-learning. This will include some tweets and posts from other leaders and schools that we have shared between ourselves as a staff – kindred spirits if you like. It's not an "essential" read, as in one that is particularly pertinent to **this** school, but it does give you an insight into what we believe and will hopefully give you some background to the motivation behind our decisions. For those of you who won't read it, the main message is that there is no right and no wrong in terms of how much you "do" in the next few weeks or months – you know what's best for your family. Keep yourselves safe, keep your children safe, try to keep yourselves as happy as you can, and keep communicating with us. Keep being our community!

Best wishes to you all,

Claire Arnold

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