



**NORTON SUB HAMDON and WEST CHINNOCK  
C of E VC PRIMARY SCHOOL FEDERATION**



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**Co-Headteachers**

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Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Well where do we begin! The last two weeks have been a lot for us all to get our heads around, to accept and to prepare for. Writing this letter helps us to reflect on the changes of the last couple of weeks - and inform you of what is taking place, in the hope that together, we work to ensure that education may continue and that we are all equipped to focus on your child's learning and well-being.

After the successful Autumn term, we were so hoping to all be at school together again. When we broke up in December, staff thought they would be coming in for the INSET day to plan and prepare for exciting class based learning opportunities for the new term. Over the Christmas holiday (and on the INSET day on the 4<sup>th</sup> January) it became increasingly clear that cases of coronavirus were rising which led to concern among many of you, staff and the eventual government announcement late on Monday evening.

You can imagine our frustration at the situation, after working so hard last Monday to try to find a solution for our schools, and it has not helped to set the scene for the calm start to term that we had planned for. We thank you all for rising to the challenge that this forced closure has brought to our schools. You have been exceptionally patient and understanding with us while we adjust and expand our current learning provision to the children and we are extremely grateful to you.

### **Adapting**

We know that our staff were motivated to enter the teaching profession to be with children in the classroom, to help them to be inspired, to learn and to develop. This past year all staff are having to adapt constantly; continuously having to step out of their comfort zones, adapting to infection prevention measures, remote teaching as well as working through the

usual pressures of their roles. Please be assured that they are all fully committed to doing everything in their power to enable all children to succeed whether at home or in school.

It is only natural in this initial period of change for us to make comparisons from school to school and of their different provisions for online learning for example. We wish to emphasise to you that we are passionate about doing what is right for our schools (for children, teachers and parents) and what is recognised to be effective.

Our response is evolving and will continue to adapt - we are doing our utmost to make it work best for you. We thank you for getting in touch with us and encourage you to continue to do so- about how we can further support your child's learning and further tailor our online provision.

### **To contact us**

We now have a new phone system! Please use the school numbers **01935 881815** for Norton and **01935 881367** for West Chinnock. Our office team are manning these lines remotely and will also pick up any messages. You can also email us on: [NortonSH@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:NortonSH@educ.somerset.gov.uk) or [westchinnock@educ.somerset.gov.uk](mailto:westchinnock@educ.somerset.gov.uk)

For any **safeguarding** concerns, here is our dedicated number: **07379 770269**

Many of you are making use of the private message function in Google Classroom under assignments and submit work; this is a great way for you to directly communicate with teachers.

### **Free School Meals**

We have arranged for any child entitled to Free School Meals to receive food vouchers. Please let us know if you need any help accessing this voucher which has been sent out as an email link to you.

### **Google Classrooms**

Google Classroom, as our online platform, is well established and we have benefitted from a term of blended learning with it being used by teachers to set homework and spelling tasks. Teachers are much more confident in using the platform to post the weekly timetable, upload work and as most of you are responding to tasks this means that teachers look forward to feeding back on your learning. Furthermore, they are exploring other features of the classroom such as quizzes.

These past couple of weeks has highlighted to us that remote provision can become all-consuming to you and staff. We are being mindful of the marathon ahead of us this term and as leaders, we have become conscious that our staff have felt more like sprinters these past two weeks! For staff to have time away from the screen and to be with their families,

we are encouraging them to respond to uploaded work within sensible business hours and by following their normal work timetable.

Do continue to upload your child's work at a time that is convenient to you and please be assured that our team will aim to respond to you within 3 days.

### **Changes**

Compared to March, we are much better prepared and now have systems in place so that we can swiftly switch to remote learning whilst continuing to provide childcare for those that need it.

Changes have taken place to both sites including the completion of major building renovations at West Chinnock. The schools are now fully set up to offer 'Covid secure' learning environments which has meant that, like before, we are well placed to provide emergency childcare for the children of critical workers across the federation. Fortunately, for this lockdown we can offer childcare provision at both schools.

We are now also in a position to loan out a number of devices with the aim being that all pupils can access the same content electronically, whether at home or at school. We have been in touch with lots of you about this although if we have not made contact with you and you feel your child would benefit from this support, then please do let us know.

For more information of our provision for remote learning and what to expect, please see the attachment outlining how we will cater for your child's learning needs at this time. We greatly appreciate your support and patience as we modify our provision to include:

- Additional support for children with Special Education Needs with a SEN Teaching Assistant able to put up targeted materials each week
- The opportunity to catch-up with teachers and classmates through Google Meets at least weekly
- Phone contact to include support for children who may have accessed Emotional Literacy support at school
- Every child working solely at home will have a member of staff as their Remote Learning Mentor to contact you at least once every two weeks
- We're also looking at further ways to increase pupil motivation and keep our school community together including a weekly assembly, home learning awards, class dojo awards and video content from our own staff

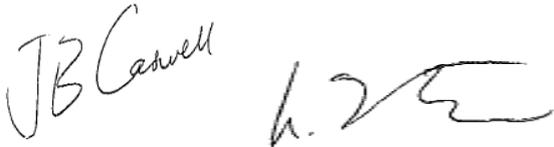
We are extremely aware of the pressure upon all of you and that this may at times feel relentless. Please remember that it is okay to pause and seek balance for example, in a shared special family activity at home or outside.

In these challenging circumstances, as we respond to a global pandemic that is outside of our control, we trust that everyone in the school community show understanding, respect

and kindness toward each other, in the knowledge that we are working towards the same aim – to all be back together at school again.

May you all continue to look after each other and stay strong. We thank you for your continued support and understanding and wish you a very restful weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'J B Caswell' written in a cursive style. The second signature on the right is 'L Stiddard', also in a cursive style.

Mr J Caswell & Ms L Stiddard

Co-Headteachers