**Newtletter 12th February 2021**

**We got here!**

Six weeks in and we are just about hanging in there! Every Newtletter I state this isn’t easy and I’m sorry, but it still isn’t! However, the days are definitely getting longer and that gives us hope that spring is coming, and we may emerge from this lockdown in the very near future. Please know you are doing a superb job and your support, particularly in the last three weeks has really kept us believing and finding new ways around challenges.

Never has a ‘holiday’ seemed less like a holiday. I can reflect that it just feels like a continuation of the same but with less structure….but stay strong we are nearly there. I really believe that on February 22nd or very soon after we may get some clarity as to the timeframes around return. I know everyone here in school has everything crossed for March 8th. The current ‘rumour’ around schools and in the press, but in no way definite or confirmed, is that the youngest will come back first then the older children. As soon as we know I will of course confirm plans to you.

Please know though that we already have plans in draft so that we won’t waste time. I wrote an extensive Newtletter about safe return on January the 3rd which stood true for less than 24 hours but I envisage all those precautions being the same. We will continue with all those strategies we know kept your children, you and our school team safe as we don’t want all we have faced over the past two months together to count for nothing in keeping infection rates down.

You really are doing an amazing job. Truly this time has challenged us all, the children are now desperately missing their friends and the routine of school. We are too, schools aren’t built not to ‘breathe’ with children and I’m counting down the days to hearing a full playground again.

**Well-Being Week**

What a super weekthanks Mrs Swallow for all your drive and determination to plan this. Thanks to the staff for their determination to continue to enrich the children’s learning in imaginative ways despite the obvious current challenges, thanks to the children for sharing their ideas and creativity and thanks to parents and carers for digging deep to try something new and embrace even more paint, glue and general craft in their lives whilst still trying to work from home – we salute you all!

**Update on improvements**

We want school to be the best it can for the children upon their return so we have kept busy. Guttering and roofing work has been undertaken, a new flowerbed constructed at the front of school, the withies are all being trimmed and tidied over half term – big thanks to Mr Newman and Mr Edleston for their help with this. The playground markings are being finalised in the hope that by Easter a refreshed surface filled with interest for the children will be done and the red class shelter is pencilled in for construction over the Easter break. Thanks to all your support, donations, the PTA and their tremendous work and because of this we are able to find the money to spend on improvements this year so our school can continue to be a great place to play and learn for every child.

**Good News**

I am very relieved to report that Mr and Mrs Challinor are now very definitely starting to recover from COVID. They will both be away from work for a while longer but things are now heading in the right direction. Thanks to all who have sent good wishes for us to pass on – it has meant a great deal to them both.

**Star Day and Parent’s Evenings**

Star Day invites have been sent out so can you please confirm your appointment as soon as you are able and rearrange if required. Parent’s evening will be remotely done as it was in autumn and will be on March 9th and 10th – more details will be sent out after half term.

**Virtual Hug competition**

Huge congratulations to all who took part. The panel of 5 judges had a really tough time choosing winners, runners up and highly commended places as all entries were excellent. In the end though congratulations go to Erin in Red Class who was our overall winner and Millie in Red and Georgie in Green class who were infant and junior winners. Congratulations too, to George in Orange Class, Noala in Yellow Class, Thomas and Savanna in Green Class and Lily in Blue Class for their highly commended entries . See the school Facebook page to see their wonderful efforts. Sending all our entrants a virtual hug back!

**Here to Help**

We know that families are facing a lot at the moment so if you need help please ask. If we can help we will. Below I have listed four ways we can actively assist:

1. **Here to listen** Don’t let small worries become big worries, yes be realistic, we can’t solve lockdown but we might know a source of help so just pick up the phone or email the office or myself. If the issue is to do with learning seek support from your child’s teacher in the first instance.
2. **Free School Meals** Check again if you may now be eligible. Yes this does bring additional monies eventually into the school budget but right now there is a lot of additional financial support and food parcels available so check if you are eligible – click here to check if you qualify; <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/free_school_meals.aspx>
3. **Winter Grant Scheme**. If you family is finding it financially difficult but you don’t qualify for free school meals you may be able to access a central government fund that the local authority is currently allocating called the Winter Grant Scheme. This gives families some weekly financial support with food vouchers, a fuel allowance and if you have broken white goods vouchers toward replacing these. Currently this is due to stop at the end of March so if you think this would help then please contact school. We have to refer you. You cannot do it yourself but if you need that help don’t feel you can’t ask!
4. **Laptops.** We have now had some older laptops donated to school and Mr Pickup is busy clearing these and setting them up ready for children to utilise. If your family would benefit from the loan of one again, just ask. We have lent out iPads and laptops throughout this time and now have three more ready for after half –term.

**Pips** We have maintained Pips for key workers throughout this time. We currently open at 8.00a.m. (We will, upon full reopening, return to 7.30a.m. ) but we are now doing hot teas again.

**And finally…**

Once again please only contact school in an emergency over weekends and during the holidays. If you need our help or to inform us of something as a matter of urgency, then please contact myself on: head@peartree.cheshire.sch.uk all other staff and office emails will **not be monitored from 4.30p.m. this evening until Monday February 22nd at 8.30a.m.**

We **reopen on Monday February 22nd** as we moved the originally planned INSET day back to January.

You must continue to register your child every day from Monday 22nd February via Teams. **This is a safeguarding requirement.**