

1<sup>st</sup> October 2020



## **Launch of Remote Learning Policy Update**

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have truly valued welcoming back all children across schools. We have been amazed at their resilience and strength of character to bounce back into learning so quickly.

Clearly we face challenging times ahead in the coming months, but with the support of our families and school communities and our hardworking staff teams I feel confident and extremely proud in the way we are all working together to make this a success for all our children to flourish.

We thank you all for supporting our school leaders with your positivity when advice and guidance changes almost on a weekly basis and with routines being established and refined, contingency plans needing to be applied for lockdowns and isolation. It is difficult and our staff are under huge pressure. In adapting to that and supporting us so positively this has made it all the more easier.

I hope parents feel the reassurance of continued decisions being made collectively, and as a Cluster Lead for the Local Authority, Oval is at the forefront of ensuring that decisions and planning are benchmarked and scrutinised at many levels and in close partnership with the LA. Our partnership working with local schools is providing a very large 'safety net' and we have had other schools come and join us for that partnership working and collaboration as well.

That said, we know that sudden closures of bubbles and schools is tremendously difficult for our families. It is also difficult for schools. It is of great frustration for us all that decisions cannot be made immediately and we cannot share all details about individual Covid cases as they happen. It is very necessary, even when closing a bubble, to sometimes need to close the school whilst we track all contacts, contingency plan and wait for advice and risk assessments to be reviewed by PHE. I do however extend my personal thanks to those who have supported our school staff, under enormous pressure with your understanding positivity and kindness, it really does go a long way whilst our schools struggle to manage all of these conflicting tensions.

We have heard, from other schools outside the Trust that some parents have taken to very public criticism of them in social media. We have been very fortunate that for Oval schools these are in the very small minority and when challenged removed very quickly. However, I would just like to reflect on the impact of that when it happens. The distraction to leaders in dealing with social media is enormous and when it happens leaders have to support their staff teams to be resilient and overcome it, sometimes with tears, always with guilt that they want to do a better job and have in some way not achieved that. Leaders have to communicate this to their governors and to the CEO in resolving matters and time is then taken away from the matters of teaching and learning – already in a climate where teams are very stretched.

Sharing concerns is however absolutely vital and healthy challenge supports us all to improve; we have prioritised our approach to listening to families – this is why we hosted immediate parent evenings to hear from our parents very early on this term. However, there are really clear channels to support families and carers to seek solutions so that they are constructive, supportive and influence policy and procedure decisions.

We really do need to know if there is a better way to plan or support families that we can consider or indeed if families are misunderstanding our plans. Negative social media activity doesn't enable solutions – it hinders it. Please support us by discouraging anyone to use these means and to use our complaints policy found on your school website or on the Trust website [here](#). We will likely ride the storm of many closures – small and large and that will take its toll on everyone.

We do advise parents and carers to be prepared with their own contingency plans that can cover school closure for at least 2 weeks at a time. We are very lucky that NWL have few cases and much lower than National, but when staff have to isolate, or we have a confirmed Covid case we may have to close multiple bubbles or whole schools if we do not have sufficient staff to run them. Often we will be unable to explain the details but rest assured there are always multiple eyes and governance oversight on decisions made. Decisions are only made with a government appointed risk assessor that oversees and advises. Safety is our priority.

When closure or isolation happens we have a contingency plan for learning and I am really pleased to be sharing with you all the launch of our updated remote learning policy documents, now on all school websites as well as the Trust website [here](#). This is the culmination of wider research and study by all leaders to ensure we have procedures that build on the great start we made in the summer to our established remote learning provision.

There are 3 main documents:

**Recovery Curriculum and Remote Learning Blueprint** which is a toolkit mainly for teachers and leaders to plan but gives some background to how we are adapting the curriculum for recovery and the **Remote Learning Policy** – a policy document that simplifies the key procedures for remote learning and the **At a glance guide** that picks out the main information for parents because it is complex! There is a **3 day emergency plan** for children and families to use in the first few days of a school or bubble closure. There may be all manner of solutions to blended learning to ensure learning continues with children logging into lessons from home, staff logging into lessons from home or everyone logging in from all over!

To support parents further we have also produced a Frequently asked Questions guide to help clear up any queries or questions arising from lockdown procedures and decision making to remote learning arrangements. A copy of this is attached but also on the website. If we haven't covered anything do please ask!

We thank you again for your support and particularly for continuing support for remote learning.

As a Trust we were very proud to have ensured 96% of children across all schools managed to stay connected and stay learning in online activity throughout the lockdown period – even if that was for some only by mobile phone. The supporting ambition of parents to overcome these obstacles was truly phenomenal and as a result our teachers tell us how positively most children have returned because they felt connected to their schools throughout. Their wellbeing is our absolute priority so this is good to hear and recognition of the positive partnership we have with our families. On behalf of all our schools, thank you all.

With all best wishes,



Mrs D. Moulds CEO