



# Stoughton Infant School Newsletter

## Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021



Dear Parents and Carers,

I was sitting down to write to you all, wanting to express to you how desperately want the children in school but alongside this, expressing some concern over doing this too soon. Too soon could potentially result in another lockdown and yet more disruption to our lives. I came across the article below that describes this mental tussle far more eloquently than me.

Before you read it, I would like to say how proud I am of us all. As a school community you continue to be supportive of each other, realising that we are all in this together. There's no doubting that the times we are living in are incredibly challenging and sadly we won't be out of the woods for some time yet.

This Wednesday, staff presented to the Governing Body about how we are providing remote learning and what it entails. It was lovely to witness their passion and drive to keep the children learning at home and in school, trying their absolute hardest to ensure that there is the same learning provided for the children at home as there is in school. We feel one of our biggest challenges is keeping everyone motivated and engaged the longer lockdown goes on. If the government stick to the date of schools reopening on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, we have 3 school weeks until then – you can do it, 15 days – you've got this!

I also wanted to say please, please, please be kind to yourselves and recognise that things may have to be a bit more 'go with the flow' and 'relaxed' so we can just make it through the day and keep ourselves sane. We're not meant to be in the same confined spaces together 24/7 and when we step back and realise this, we can see why our lives can get a tad stressed, emotional and tempers a little flared!

So.....

1. You may need to relax TV and screen time so you can just get through the day and get some of your own things done! Don't feel guilty!
2. You may need to eat a few more snacks to keep you going – don't feel guilty!
3. You may need to tackle the children's learning when you can, little and often is ok. Young children can't concentrate for long periods of time. Don't feel guilty!
4. Don't feel guilty if you don't manage to get everything done and don't feel you need to catch up – that will just add more stress.
5. Some days you'll feel like you've aced it and achieved so much and the next you may only be able to achieve one task – this is ok too and perfectly normal, don't feel guilty!
6. Get outside each day – splash in the puddles, ride a bike or just take a stroll, this may help to re-set

Yes, we will contact you if we see that Tapestry hasn't been active. This is more from a safeguarding perspective to check that everyone is ok, safe and well and we'll also offer support and help so your children can continue to learn.



*We fall.  
We break.  
We fail.  
but then,  
We rise.  
We heal.  
We overcome.*

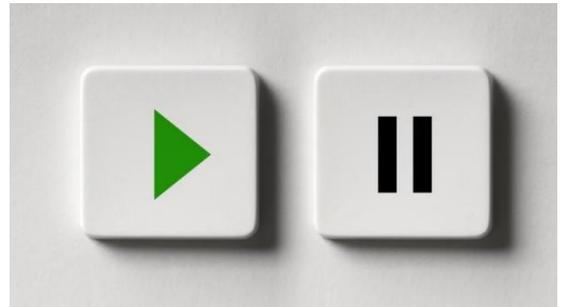


## When we reopen schools, they need to stay open!

When it comes to making education policy at the moment, the government must wrestle with two important but contradictory realities.

Firstly, access to school has been restricted, because scientists have established the role that schools play in community transmission of Covid. Remote learning is needed so that the spread of the virus can be brought back under control. This decision has been regarded as necessary.

Secondly, restricted access to school is having a negative effect on pupils' wellbeing and education, because home learning is no substitute for face-to-face teaching. Access to school has been a lower priority than suppressing the virus and preventing further deaths. This is regarded as a difficult compromise and, increasingly, as unsustainable.



Like a dam that is about to burst, the calls to get pupils back into school are getting louder and louder with each passing day.

What's deeply concerning about this is that the government has not shown the ability to block out the political noise when it comes to education, responding to loud voices instead of making sensible policy.

Coronavirus: Children need to stay in school once they're back

The pressure to organise a sustainable return must override popular pressure to hit an arbitrary date, come what may. Don't get me wrong – all children need to be back in school as soon as possible. But they also need to stay there once they're back. The government must not organise a return that runs the risk of widespread closures again.

The risk of this approach is too great to go unstated. A return to school on 8 March or thereabouts, without the proper safeguards in place, offers no guarantee that schools won't have to go back into lockdown again and again, heaping yet more turmoil and disruption on to young people.

Despite this, there are loud voices calling for the government to change its approach to schools and the pandemic. These voices argue that the priorities should be flipped – that worries about community transmission are secondary to the worries about the damage to pupils' wellbeing and learning.

But, in truth, they are interdependent, and neither can be considered without the other.

Those voices calling for an urgent plan to open schools again, come what may, are missing the point that community transmission affects children just as much as restricting their access to school.

Children might be less likely to contract the virus themselves, but they will see loved ones lost and suffer that heartbreak along with adults. What children need, what families need, and the economy, too, is not simply a plan to reopen schools, but a plan to keep schools open and to avoid having to close them again for the duration of the pandemic.

Once we do have the green light, we must make sure that it stays green.

Reopening schools: How to ensure a sustainable return

There are several fundamentals that underpin a sustainable return to school for all pupils. All these fundamentals require tough choices of the kind that the government has so far proven reluctant to take.

To begin with, we need to solve the issue of vaccinations for the school workforce. While the jury is out on whether schools are more dangerous places to work in than anywhere else, school leaders and their teams are certainly no less likely to contract Covid than anyone else.

Staff who are ill cannot teach. And therefore, disruption to education continues, whether the school gates are open to all or not.

Vaccinating staff has the dual benefit of providing some reassurance to the workforce while also being the most logical step to take to make sure that the minimum number of them fall ill and are unable to work. One absent teacher or teaching assistant has the potential to affect the education of 30 or more pupils, for instance.

But vaccination is not the whole story. The systems of control and other safety measures in school will remain as important as ever. Lifting the lockdown on schools cannot and should not be done without a thorough review of these measures, to determine whether they are still effective.

Without this review, the government would be playing fast and loose with community transmission. Safety measures in schools have to command the confidence not just of staff but of pupils and their families, too.

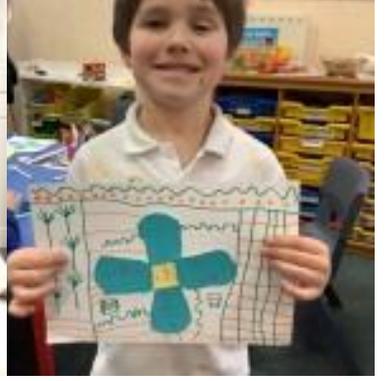
Even the most optimistic person can see that this will be a long-term effort. We'll have to think about wellbeing and achievement as two halves of the same coin now, and not separate currency altogether.

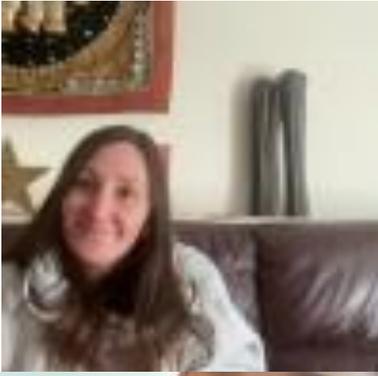
The government's role is not to interfere, but to make choices – the correct choices, the hard choices and possibly the unpopular choices – to create the conditions for schools and young people to succeed.

We need a sustainable plan not just to get more pupils back into school, but to keep schools open, with the proper safety measures in place to withstand whatever the next phase of the pandemic throws at us.

Paul Whiteman is general secretary of the NATT school leaders' union.

Scroll down for some lovely photos 😊









SURREY  
COUNTY COUNCIL

# SURREY URGENTLY NEEDS MORE FOSTER CARERS

**Do you have a spare room?  
Could you open your home  
and heart to a child?**

Have you considered fostering? Meet a foster family in your local area and hear about their experiences.

Email foster carer **Cindy** at [Cindyajmorris@gmail.com](mailto:Cindyajmorris@gmail.com) for more information and/or to request to join the online event.

Call **07851654544** if you have trouble joining the event!

Find out more about fostering: [www.surreycc.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/fostering)



**Tuesday**  
**9<sup>th</sup> February 7:45pm**

**Friday**  
**26<sup>th</sup> March 7:45pm**

**Thursday**  
**8<sup>th</sup> April 3pm (half term)**