



Helmingsham Primary School and Nursery

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Date 4th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to start by saying a really big thank you all for your encouragement and positivity over the last few days. I can appreciate that many of you are anxious about the return to school for your children and I know that the same anxieties are being shared with many staff and their families too.

Messages to the schools have been conflicting and I am sure that you are aware of the stories in the media where unions are disagreeing with government decisions about the safety of children in schools. As a trust, we are committed, as always, to educating our young people and providing quality experiences to all whilst doing our best to keep them as safe as possible. In general, the advice from government, Suffolk County Council and the trust is that where schools are open for your child, attendance is compulsory. However, we understand parents' anxieties and in the current circumstances will not be imposing sanctions for non-attendance but if your child will not be attending school you will need to put this in writing to the school office at your earliest convenience.

We have been working together today to review the risk assessments (please see website for updates) and measures that are in place in our schools. Whilst we cannot guarantee that your child will be 2metres apart from the other children at all times, we have put in additional measures to ensure that we are doing all we can to keep the children safe. We will be encouraging them to keep their distance from each other but please reinforce this with your children at home. Physical contact between peers is inevitable but we will be reminding children to be as distanced as possible throughout the day.

Classrooms are all well ventilated and many of the windows will remain open throughout the day. We advise the children to wear multiple layers of clothing- they may wear a vest, base-layer or *skin* under their uniform and we are encouraging them to wear their school fleeces as an additional layer. If they do not have a school fleece, they may wear a plain navy or red fleece. We would recommend that the girls wear trousers or tights in the colder weather as the little ankle socks look pretty but do not keep them warm! We will of course still be expecting them to wear their PE kit on the days that they have PE and they will require an additional set of clothes to be kept in school for outdoor learning. Please make sure that they also have wellies and a change of footwear in school as we will be making use of the outdoors as much as possible. It goes without saying that a coat is now essential in this colder weather and please make sure that all clothing is named.

Helmingsham will remain a single bubble and at Henley, KS1 and KS2 will remain separate bubbles- parts of the playground will be sectioned off for each phase for break and lunchtimes. Lunchtimes will be staggered so that all children can eat in the hall across the lunch hour. Tables and chairs will be cleaned between each sitting and the windows will remain open in the hall. Please share the menu choices with your children each day and continue to make payments via school gateway. If your child is packed lunch, please make sure your child can be as independent as possible to avoid close contact with the midday supervisors.

Due to the small hall space at Helmingham, meals will be plated according to your child's menu choice and delivered to the tables. They will not be forced to eat everything on their plate if they do not like a veg choice.

We will be making use of the school field when possible so please ensure your child has wellies in school. Wet playtimes- children will remain in their classes.

The bubble groups will remain independent in the school, reducing/ restricting movement as much as possible. KS1 will still complete phonics and Maths activities in the same structure as the Autumn term.

In Henley, as our classes have the traditional style blow heaters, these will not be on during the lessons. We will ensure the classes are warm enough by having the heating on to warm the building before school and at times when the children are not in the room. Helmingham is warmed by radiators so will remain on- even when the windows are open!

There will be no afterschool or before school clubs and activities this term. Outside agencies who deliver the sports clubs have been postponed and will be rescheduled for when it is safe to continue.

Watoto (Henley's before and after school club) will run as usual, on the understanding that this child care facility will be available to both bubbles and the children will therefore be mixed. Before school club is also available at Helmingham when booked through the school office.

We are encouraging children not to bring lots of things with them to school. Please encourage them to leave toys etc at home. They will only require 1 bag to transport their water bottles (water only please- not squash), reading books etc. Reading books will still be issued and will be quarantined for 48hrs when returned to school before being reissued to other children. They may bring in a simple pencil case but it will need to remain in school to reduce surface transmission. Learning packs of pencils etc will continue to be provided in school for those not wanting to have their own pencil case.

The children will still have their temperatures taken- even though the thermometers have proven temperamental in the colder weather. If your child has a high temperature, you will be called back or contacted and expected to return to collect them.

Vertas will continue to clean the school at Henley and Emma will continue cleaning at Helmingham (with additional support in the school house). The schools had a deep clean over the holiday period and although Andre (our Henley cleaner) left before Christmas cover has been put in place until they can find a long term replacement. We continue to clean all communal areas and fittings (hand rails, light switches, door handles etc) periodically throughout the day. Surfaces and chairs in classes are wiped down regularly throughout the day. Hand sanitiser and hand washing facilities are promoted and used regularly.

We are also asking you as parents to be more vigilant and ensure that you remain 2 metres apart in the playground. We ask that only 1 parent collects the children at the end of the day, in order to minimise the numbers of people in the school grounds and therefore reduce risk of transmission. We would also encourage you to wear face masks whilst you are inside the school grounds. Whilst it is not common practise to wear a facemask outside, we are aware that large numbers of parents are in the playground for a short period of time. Where possible, please leave siblings at home. If they are with you when you collect, please keep them with you rather than running around the field and playground. Please do not hang around to chat! As lovely as it is to see you all and for you to meet with your friends, we are trying to make school as safe as possible for the children and our staff.

Staff will be wearing masks/ visors when on duty at either end of the school day and some are choosing to wear these throughout the day.

At Henley, we will be bringing the children out to the end of the school buildings so please stay clear of the small playground area outside of the hall so that vision is clear for staff to hand over the children to you safely and quickly, thereby reducing the time to vacate the school at the end of the day.

At Helmingham, please could the nursery parents stand clear of the fence so children can be handed over quickly and safely. In the main playground, please use both gates to enter/ exit, reducing the bottle necks at these points.

Please note, if you choose/ have chosen to keep your child/ren at home whilst we are open, we are not obligated to set work for your child/ren to complete. Each class teacher will be issuing a class newsletter/ topic plan for the term by the end of this week so you will have an idea of the work being covered in school. Staff may choose to add work to the google classroom but the trust website has links to websites with a range of activities and many of you will still have the learning packs that were issued at the start of the original lockdown, with reference to many online learning sites. If we have to close, then we will automatically move to teaching via the google classroom platform with some live lessons, recorded sessions, power-point teaching and suggested activities to mimic (as closely as possible) a real school experience.

We are aware that the CEO of the trust will also be issuing a letter to parents as soon as possible and we will endeavour to keep you up to date with changes as soon as we are able.

Thank you for your co-operation and support throughout the pandemic. As always, we will strive to do everything we can to make life as normal for the children as possible and support them in their wellbeing and education.

If you need to contact the school, or have any further enquiries please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes for the New Year

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Hawes', written in a cursive style.

Miss Stephanie Hawes