

## HERITAGE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Park Farm Way  
Park Farm  
Peterborough  
PE2 8XA

Headteacher:  
Miss K Bell B. Ed. Hon s. (Cantab).

Telephone: 01733 703656  
Fax: 01733 703657

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Website: [www.heritageparkschool.co.uk](http://www.heritageparkschool.co.uk)  
Email: [office@heritagepark.peterborough.sch.uk](mailto:office@heritagepark.peterborough.sch.uk)

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you, for not only your support, but also your flexibility in coping with what has been an intense and concerning fortnight, both in education and more globally. I know that change can be difficult for everyone, especially for some of our children – as well as for parents and education staff.

Nevertheless, we have collectively managed a move to a different form of education as positively as possible, and we are now fairly well established in both remote and on-site provision. During the previous lockdown, we were able to protect staff members by enabling many of them to work from home, teaching and caring for our pupils remotely. Pupil numbers in school were considerably lower than they are this time where there has been a significant increase of critical worker requests.

Due to the new variant and its increased transmissibility, our risk assessment for pupils and adults in school has had to identify a limit to our capacity in each bubble, with a maximum of 50% or less, depending on the needs of the children in each bubble. As such, pupils in school have not been grouped together as they were in March and are instead remaining in their usual classrooms. This means that we need a teacher or adult in every classroom so you will notice that all staff remain working in school, unless they are considered too vulnerable to attend.

Staff have adapted, with very little notice, to this new way of teaching. I know this collective mentality is matched by our parent community who are doing all they can to support us and I am hugely grateful. It is crucial that we work hard to limit the chances of any bubble in school needing to close. Bubble closure will occur if a member of staff or pupil in the bubble test positive for Covid-19 or if we do not have enough staff to cater for the bubble.

We recognise that we have an important responsibility to support efforts to fight this virus by making the school available to children whose parents offer critical work towards our nation's Covid-19 response or to those who have a child who meets the 'vulnerable pupil status'. We do not wish to cause a divide between parents and the school, but we have to do everything we can to limit bubble closure as this will undoubtedly have a huge impact on parents' ability to continue their critical work. As such, I politely request once again that parents follow the guidance from our Government and keep their children at home if they are able.

If in-school requests become too high, health and safety will take precedence above all else, and places will be offered on a priority basis as listed below.

1. **Vulnerable Pupils**

Parents will have been contacted directly regarding eligible pupils.

2. **Health and social care**

a) staff working on the Covid 19 vaccination programme.

b) staff who have frequent face-to-face contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care in either secondary or primary care, mental health, urgent and emergency care and community settings.

c) those working in independent, voluntary and non-standard healthcare settings such as hospices, and community-based mental health or addiction service.

d) laboratory, pathology and mortuary staff.

e) those working for a sub-contracted provider of facilities services such as portering or cleaning.

f) temporary, locum or 'bank' staff, including those working in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, students, trainees and volunteers who are working with patients.

g) frontline social care workers directly working with vulnerable people who need care and support irrespective of where they work (for example in hospital, people's own homes, day centres, or supported housing); or who they are employed by (for example local government, NHS, independent sector or third sector).

h) Those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

3. **Education and childcare**

Childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers, specialist education professionals who must remain active during the coronavirus (COVID-19) response to deliver this approach.

4. **Public safety and national security**

This includes: police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and EU transition), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff and those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

5. Above this, **if schools have capacity**, in line with their risk assessment, consideration will be given to the remaining categories when offering places:
- a) Management of deceased.
  - b) Religious staff.
  - c) Local and National government officers delivering key frontline services.
  - d) Charities delivering frontline services.
  - e) Key utilities, communication and financial workers e.g., water, road, rail, freight transport connected with EU transition, postal, IT services linked to COVID 19 response and financial services.
  - f) Food and other necessary goods: including food production, distribution, delivery and sales.

Anxieties are running high for everyone across the nation and we understand it is not only schools who are working at great risk to their own physical and emotional health. Coupled with this, Government announcements can, and have done, very little to allay staff fears about the virus in school and indeed have, for many staff, only served to increase frustrations and anxiety. These factors together can potentially make it all too easy for a divide to become apparent between schools and their communities. I understand how difficult it is to look after children whilst working from home. We will do everything we can to support those parents who are finding themselves in this situation so please do get in touch if you need any additional support.

I think it is key for parents who are worried about their children's learning to remember that children are often learning more than we realise about kindness, tolerance, empathy and patience. You are, and always have been, your child's primary educator. If you decide that your child is going to spend the entire session playing in the garden, or baking, or watching TV, then that is your choice. That is your right. There is nothing to feel guilty about whatsoever. Please bear in mind that the expectations set by the DfE for remote learning must be adhered to by the school, but this does not mean you have to complete it all. We will not penalise any family for being unable to complete work set, we will just offer help and support. Teachers worry that parents will complain they have not set enough work and so they are sending home what is expected of them, but please do not interpret this as an expectation on your part. All we ask is that, wherever possible, children access the home learning and complete activities at least once a day.

### Technology

We are aware that some families have limited access to IT resources and broadband for a whole variety of reasons, making it potentially difficult to access our remote learning. Thank you for completing our recent survey about this. We have currently allocated out all of the Chromebooks that we have available but, thanks to funding from the 'Friends of Heritage Park Primary School' we are in the process of ordering more to meet the demand of requests we have received. Further information will be sent out as soon as these devices are set up.


For information, the Government has recently announced a scheme by which the most disadvantaged families, in receipt of Pupil Premium, can request help to increase the mobile data allowances for children and young people who do not have fixed broadband at home and

cannot afford additional data for their devices. If this is something that may be of interest to you please contact the school to discuss this further.

I pay huge tribute to the hard work of the staff and the pupils, and to you the parents and carers, for your support in helping us move rapidly to our "remote education" over the course of the last week or so. I acknowledge the additional burden the partial school closure will place on many. We will do all we can to support and keep children engaged in their learning, whether this be in school or at home.

As always, we will continue to keep in touch and update you on any important information over the coming weeks.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Groaty'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'P' and 'G'.

Miss K Bell  
Headteacher