

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

We would like to thank parents for their feedback regarding changes to the school week that will be taking place after half term. We realise that this news was unexpected and would like to apologise that this came as rather a shock to parents. Even for us, it is a change that we could not have imagined at this time last year and would not have contemplated before these unusual times. It has been a difficult decision that has not been taken lightly and one which we will continue to review moving forwards.

Despite the impact of Covid regulations on school life, our children have made a positive start to the academic year. To continue this growth over the long term, we have had to review the measures put in place to make them sustainable for all involved. We would like to share further reasoning behind our decision to close earlier on a Friday.

- Due to staggered starts, we now open earlier, lunchtime is shorter and the day is longer. Pupils begin arriving at 8:15am with all lessons beginning by 8:30am. Lunch is now 45 minutes. The children's school day finishes by 3:30pm.
  - A post-Covid school day length of 7 hours and 15 minutes (Teaching time of 6 hours and 30 minutes every day.)
  - Our pre-Covid hours were 8:55am to 3:10pm with an hour for lunch, therefore a school day of 6 hours 15 minutes. (Teaching time of 5 hours and 15 minutes.)

Thus, the school is delivering more lesson contact time than before the pandemic. Over an hour extra per day which equates to an extra day a week contact time for Stocksbridge Junior School children. Even after moving to an earlier closure on Fridays, the school will still be delivering significantly more lesson contact time than before March.

- Staff do not currently get a break during the day as they stay with their class bubbles throughout the children's breaks. During lunchtimes, staff are often supervising small groups or individual children plus they are having to clean their learning environment. This is impacting on staff well-being.
- As this half term has progressed, children are noticeably more tired towards the end of the week. In addition, we are very aware of the increase to staff workload and the need to avoid staff burnout due to the additional hours being delivered in the week. To protect everyone's physical and mental health and wellbeing, especially in these current times, we contemplated a range of solutions. Options were to reduce the school day finish time every day of the week or reduce contact time on a single day of the week. Any change would be disruptive to different people in different ways. It was decided to finish earlier on a single day would be the least disruptive option. This will be reviewed after approximately four weeks. A parent/carer survey is planned.



National Support School  
designed by  
National College for  
Teaching & Leadership



Healthy  
Minds  
Nurturing Emotional Wellbeing in Schools

We've embraced  
in our Setting

thrive

ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND  
ARTSMARK  
GOLD



- During Friday afternoons, staff will be involved in cleaning, lesson preparation, contacting parents and ensuring children who are learning remotely have access to the curriculum.
- Stocksbridge Junior School staff also returned to work a week early this term, to support the Year 3 transition into their new school, giving up a week of their summer break. This is in addition to providing individual tours of the school to each of the 93 new families.
- School had been open throughout lockdown for key worker children. Our staff have worked incredibly hard to look after the children of key workers in school even through school and bank holidays and supported home learning on Seesaw plus providing email and telephone support to families. We have delivered food parcels to the doorsteps of families, hand delivered annual reports and ensured children were still recognised for their achievements though our Lockdown Prize Night.
- Stocksbridge Junior School has recently purchased 110 new ipads to develop children's online skills and to ensure our blended learning approach is honed and ready should we have to disperse any of our bubbles or become subject to local or national restrictions.

Understandably, some parents have concerns about childcare on Friday afternoons. As always, we want to support parents where we can and we are currently looking at the possibility of providing paid childcare provision, whilst maintaining our Covid secure bubbles. As soon as we have more definite information about this, we will contact parents. However, it is worth parents being aware that should this provision prove viable, places will be limited.

As a school, we endeavour to provide the best education for your children, despite the ongoing and numerous changes that have altered school life completely over the last six months. We are only able to achieve this thanks to our committed and hardworking staff who continue to be conscientious and offer their very best at all times even in challenging circumstances. Until we can return to some kind of normality, we will continue to regularly review our practice and procedures, keeping the wellbeing of our children and staff at the forefront of our decisions.

Finally, we know that not everything has been perfect during this time and strive to do our very best for all involved. We would like to thank parents who have felt at ease to approach the school directly to discuss their concerns. We value our relationship with parents and always welcome honest and constructive feedback.

Thank you for your ongoing support in these unprecedented times.

Mrs S Gaymond  
Headteacher