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11<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

As we enter our tenth week since school re-opened to all pupils in September and when I started at Oldbury Park as Executive principal, I thought I would update you on some of the things we have been doing so far.

Of course, we are living with a back-drop of Covid-19 and all the difficulties and barriers that this is causing. However, despite everything being more difficult, our risk assessments are robust, adapted as necessary to meet the new guidance that comes into schools weekly and staff are doing an amazing job. Like us all they miss seeing each other as they have to stick to their bubbles and meetings are now held virtually. This is difficult for us all but we have tried to not let it hamper our drive for school improvement.

From the beginning of term, we have been assessing how well the school is providing the education for the children. This has resulted in us establishing our priorities for the next year and beyond.

As you are aware, our Oldbury Observer has been created and we have received some really positive feedback about it. We want to give all stakeholders an insight into the school particularly when we cannot have visitors.

#### Pupil Premium

During September, the school undertook a review of provision for our Pupil Premium Pupils. The results of this have provided us with an action plan to promote accelerated progress for these pupils so that outcomes are closer to that of those non-pupil premium pupils. You can see our strategy document on the website and this also sits within our school improvement plan.

#### Safeguarding

In October we had a safeguarding review so that senior leaders could be absolutely sure that everything that needs to be in place is. The external reviewer was very complimentary about our Covid safety measures which was re-assuring, and all other aspects of the review were positive.

#### Bubbles

As you are aware, we are working in bubbles in school and this is helping to keep everyone safe. Where teachers have needed to self-isolate, we have been able to continue teaching by the teachers from home with other adults supporting in classrooms and where children have needed to self-isolate, teachers have been providing home learning for them. Our next step is to improve our blended learning provision and this is outlined later in this letter.

## In School Monitoring

- Senior leaders have undertaken a monitoring week in the school. This enabled us to get a view of the quality of education. This has informed next steps for professional development and the curriculum. Regular monitoring is timetabled throughout the year to ensure there are consistent approaches and provision of the highest quality. Pupils will engage in conversations with leaders during these monitoring weeks to discuss their learning and progress.

- Pupil progress meetings have been carried out and I will undertake these each half term. These meetings give teachers a platform to discuss all the children in their class, what is going well for them and any barriers to learning they are experiencing. Professional dialogue like this supports teachers to find strategies to overcome barriers and also enables me to hold teachers to account for the progress of their children. With the information from these meetings, leaders meet and put interventions into place where needed to ensure no pupil “falls through an academic net” because they have not been identified.

### Assessment:

As you can imagine, we have undertaken many assessments with children both for academic information and wellbeing.

- The school has introduced Pixl to Years 2-6 which is a diagnostic assessment tool that highlights any gaps in pupils’ learning which can then be targeted by the teachers. During the first half term pupils undertook transition units to support them back into school and then were reassessed for the impact of the transition work. All pupils had made progress but after so much time off school, some inevitably still have gaps that are the focus in lessons. Pixl has given teachers enough information to be able to focus very specifically on areas that are not secure and in time this will enable progress to accelerate.

- Assessments for Year 1 will become available in the Spring term.

- During the first half term, we also evaluated our provision for supporting pupils’ health and well-being and we now have two members of staff undergoing training to become Thrive Licensed Practitioners to work 1-1 with children who have the greatest need. A baseline has been carried out so that all teachers know which areas to work on to support the children in their class. A series of training sessions have begun to ensure all staff know and use the Thrive approach. The school has used Thrive in the past but not as a whole school. This implementation led by Ms R Hall will support all our young people. We will be publishing information about Thrive and the philosophy behind it shortly.

### Curriculum:

Prior to reopening, the senior leadership team and I began working together on curriculum development. The curriculum is the single most important aspect of learning and getting it right is crucial.

- In place now is a curriculum methodology which can be found on the website. This enables everyone to have a clear view of what our mission is for the curriculum and therefore how that can become a reality in the classroom.

- In September we also implemented a new Central RSA Teaching and Learning Policy, again available on the website. This will drive much of the professional development work for staff this year along with curriculum design and is being led by Mr Williams.

- Teachers are continuing to embed KASE (knowledge, attributes, skills and experiences) into their planning to ensure your children have access to the best teaching.

- Reading is a big focus for us as we know that reading is the window into all other learning.

Ms Jones is leading English for us and has been working with an outstanding Consultant on producing a reading rationale for the school. This was finished only yesterday but will soon be available for you to see on the website in the curriculum section.

- A new phonics scheme has been introduced after four teachers underwent specific training.

Read, Write, Ink (RWI) is now being used in Reception and Key Stage 1 as the tool for teaching phonics. Understanding and application of phonics is fundamental to most children learning to read. We are already seeing impact of this change with children making accelerated progress towards their end of year target. All teachers across the school have received disseminated training. Mrs Cartwright and Ms R Hall are leading Phonics for the school.

RWI is used to teach spelling in Key Stage 2.

- A handwriting scheme has also, just this week, been introduced, again so we can ensure consistency and high expectations of handwriting and presentation across the school.

- Another strategy that is new to the school which is already having a big impact is whole class guided reading. Again, we have been privileged to work with a consultant who I have known for many years since we worked together in school improvement for the local authority. He is working with teachers across the school to develop engaging and high level sequences of learning for guided reading, ensuring that all elements of reading are taught. The highest quality of teaching is essential for pupils to achieve the best progress and attainment. These sequences of learning will facilitate this. The work has been very positively received by all the teachers who are doing a fabulous job in taking on this initiative.

- The next step for English is to write a rational for writing and begin work on the standards of writing and the progression map through school.

- Mrs Tudge has recently agreed to lead Maths in the school and this is a great opportunity for the school. Mrs Tudge is a Maths graduate with excellent subject knowledge which will enable her to lead the subject effectively, offering any support where needed. On Friday, I will be launching a new Primary Maths Calculation Policy across the multi academy trust. This has been a piece of work that has been hampered by school closure, but it is now finished and we are excited to implement it from next week. This will be an excellent resource for teachers but will also be useful for you as it has examples of how concepts are taught throughout the school. The document is progressive and ensures learning builds year on year for pupils.

- All subjects are under review with subject leaders working very hard to ensure each subject is progressive and is underpinned by KASE. Co-design work is happening across the Trust. This is enabling leaders and teachers to think at a very high level and produce amazing planning which is being rolled out across the schools. Oldbury Park senior and subject leaders are involved in this process which is very exciting and is resulting in schemes of work of the highest quality based on the key concepts of each subject.

So far History, Geography and Modern Foreign languages schemes are being piloted in school. Computing will be the next one and by the end of this term a draft scheme will be in place for all subjects. During the Spring term we will evaluate them, make any final adjustments and then they will

be adopted. Again this will ensure that planning and teaching will be of the highest quality and therefore your children have access to the best learning opportunities.

#### Working with Parents:

- You will have received your short videos of your children talking about their learning and a holistic report of how they have settled back into school. You have also been offered a telephone conversation should you wish to discuss your child further with their teachers.
- We have provided email addresses to you so contacting your child's teacher or phase leader is more immediate.
- This has been, and continues to be, a time of heightened anxiety for you as many of your children have been away from school for a significant period and we cannot invite you into school as we normally would to meet their teachers or generally be involved in school.
- The technology infrastructure at the school has also been a barrier and it has not had an easily accessible learning platform to correspond with parents with.
- I am delighted to tell you that we have now received our long awaited learning platform – SeeSaw. Much research has taken place to ensure we purchased a platform that was easy to use and accessible for most families. Year 5 will be trialing it this week and when we are happy that it is working well, we will implement it in Years 1 - 6. I am sure this will make home learning and feedback between parent, children and teachers much more available. Reception parents will continue to be able to interact with staff through Tapestry.
- In addition, the school should be having a new server installed during the Christmas break. This will provide us with the opportunity to store more video footage and the working technology in school should be enhanced greatly.
- Central RSA Academy Trust does not subscribe to Zoom as there have been several reported safeguarding issues published Nationally. We do however have the capability to use Teams and this could also be a way of communicating with some of you in the future if you also have that facility.

#### More general news:

You will continue to receive news through the Oldbury Observer but I thought I would close my letter with a few more pieces of information.

#### Collection:

We would like to start a collection at school for Jayden. We have thought long and hard about it and with Jayden's Mum's blessing, today I have registered for an Elephant calf (part of the Worcester Big Parade in aid St Richard's Hospice 2021). We have received confirmation that our request has been successful. We would like all the children to be involved in some way in designing and decorating the elephant in memory of Jayden. It will then be included in the City sculpture trail and when the trail is dismantled, it will be returned to school as a lasting, permanent sculpture in memory of Jayden.

Each elephant calf costs £750 which is donated to the hospice so you will be supporting both the Oldbury community but also the wider one. Look out for how to donate in Oldbury Observer on Friday.

Jayden loved apples! So we also plan to plant some apple trees in the schools grounds – this being a living memory of him. We hope that you feel this is something that you can contribute to.

‘Strictly dance in’ for Children in Need:

This week children are thoroughly enjoying the fun of learning the “Strictly” dance moves. On Friday, in their bubbles, the children will take part in the Big Oldbury Dance in aid of Children in Need – what fun!

It is official, Christmas is coming to Oldbury Park! Mr Card is, at this very moment, writing a production which will involve everyone. This will not be without challenges for all the reasons mentioned above but we will overcome the challenges and a filmed production will be created.

I have also had direct contact with FC. He will make a virtual appearance at some point over the Christmas period in school.

Christmas lunch and Christmas parties will also take place, within bubbles and in a different form but do not fear, glitter and tinsel will be involved.

Year 6 news. The Year 6 team will be inviting you to a virtual meeting to explain the SATs and provide information of how you can support your child. Please watch out for this in the coming days.

I fear that I have probably written too much now and so will close but I hope this information gives you an insight into the huge amount of work that is happening behind the scenes in school to ensure your children get the best possible opportunities.

Very best wishes

Di Smith