Towers Times

Newsletter 23rd October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of one of the fastest but most unusual ends to a half term known in education, we thank you so much for your support and confidence in us with the reopening of our schools which in turn has meant your children returned happy, calm, engaged and ready to learn. Whilst the weather has not been so kind to us all in recent weeks particularly during the hours of 8:15-9:00am and then again at 3-4pm we can assure you that when the gates are closed and everyone is in their places the weather inside our schools has been glorious like sunshine with eagerness to learn coupled with kindness and compassion pervading day in day out by our brilliant children.

We thank you for your understanding and support with the array of new systems and procedures - we have whole heartedly tried our very best throughout this time, and whilst a few have felt things could have been better, we are sincerely thankful for those of you that provided feedback to us with possible solutions to issues that have arisen as we got used to this new normal.

Our attendance has been excellent on returning to school in September, in fact our records show our attendance has been better than this time last year. Compared to other schools locally and nationally we are well exceeding those percentages too! We have had many families self-isolate for varying reasons and as you will know, due to confirmed cases, one year group has continued their learning from home - and we reach out to families affected by either isolation of forced collapsing of class bubbles - you have done and continue to do a fantastic job - whilst you as parents continue to juggle working from home fulfilling your own working responsibilities as well as supporting the education of your children. The pandemic really is a testing time to live through - as this affects each and every one of us and we appreciate your understanding and recognition of the impact this has on staff who too have family commitments to juggle with the on-going impact the regulations have on us all. However to protect one another is vital - this really is a matter of everyone having a responsibility to protect where we can the health of the public.

Whilst sadly it seems that COVID-19 will very much continue to be part of our lives for some time to come government have directed schools to have a remote learning plan in place and school staff and governors have put together principles and intentions which can be found on the schools website under COVID19, parental communications tab alongside our blended learning plan. We promise to do all we can to support you and your child and as ever we will strive to work with you during these challenging times in order to serve our children - so please do work with us on this as we all grapple with the varied regulations bestowed upon us.

We have mentioned in previous newsletters how we continue to find it strange to be working with you at 'arm's length' as it were due to social distance measures. However, we know we can continue to work in harmony demonstrating togetherness with shared knowledge that leads to empowerment.

This week we met with Andrew Rosindell MP for Romford and Councillor Christine Smith to discuss the impact of reopening of schools, discussing key issues with them that affect not only us here at Towers but global issues faced by schools.

Notices

Application for secondary schools closes 31st October 2020. Please visit https://www.havering.gov.uk/info/20008/school_admissions/480/apply_for_a_secondary_school_place_for_september_2021

Diary dates

Dates published including school holidays and training days will be sent today and will be on our schools website for reference.

Attendance

A big well done to everyone with the attendance figures for this half term – whilst isolation continues to permeate school life when children have been able to attend the percentages are terrific

– well done!

Nursery	96.8%
Reception	98.69%
Year 1	97.2%
Year "	94.64%
Year 3	97.89%
Year 4	97.51%
Year 5	96.95%
Year 6	96.62%

Stay connected

Please do sign up to Twitter as this is our social media platform sharing highlights of school life and messages with the community. To connect please use the following handles @TowersInfant @TowersJuniorSch Don't forget also any questions or queries you may have each year group does have their own email addresses too.

Hands Face Space

Let's all continue to do our best to protect ourselves and our families in these uncertain times, and in relation to this, please could we remind all parents/carers and visitors to the school that they need to wear a face mask whilst on site

We wanted you to know these issues we face also as our mission statement makes clear - we build our future together… togetherness is key. So in our meeting we discussed, the contradictory or last minute changes to guidance and rules enforced, a desperate need for the government to support families and school staff with providing devices/machines which are needed following changes in law to 'remote learning' expectations and finally transparency with regards to the financial implications schools face.

We were able to show both visitors how as leaders here at Towers we had worked tirelessly in making adaptations to our schools buildings and environment with the remodelling of our reception classrooms, installing walls and windows throughout, fences to the front of the nursery and reception playground, alongside path replacements to the back of our junior schools - and over the half term a further 9 sinks will be installed to our junior school toilets and windows will be replaced in our infant hall to provide further ventilation to the building. All of these adjustments have cost nothing to us as schools and have not affected our schools budget In anyway and whilst we are thankful to the asset management team within the authority for these, we have had to continue to ensure that these changes took place at no cost to the school as money is a finite resource for everyone during this time!

With this in mind, we went on to explain that whilst the government had expected schools deliver on a range of control measures, there were expensive overheads in turn and whilst the DFE did provide Schools the opportunity to claim for expenses, sadly we discovered not all expenses were covered in the initial round of bidding and currently we have spent £95,000 in putting measures in place with reopening our schools. Andrew was shocked to learn that monies are still not with schools and recognised this amount will increase over time as we work through the pandemic, paying for cleaners on site during the school day as well as ensuring paper towels and soaps are topped up, to name but two. We made it clear we will continue to spend monies in maintaining our various control measures to reduce the risk of transmission, however, it was noted this spend does and will add to our deficit budget.

The visit was an extremely positive experience for us as leaders and Andrew could not believe how literature he had read over time actually looked in practice and was impressed with the 'military operation' planning, undertaken from the opening of schools, to the details of timetables for break times, lunch times and PE sessions, as well as the setting up of 5 staff rooms plus the internal road mapping for moving around the schools in ensuring bubbles do not mix.

We also shared with both representatives, of us the people, how since June we have tried to acquire support and funding for the provision of marquees on both playgrounds and the field to enable the children, in the ever changing weather conditions, to have outdoor space to run, play and take shelter from the rain. However, due to costs the schools budget simply cannot sustain them and all other connections the schools have tried are unable to assist. We know by having these in situ in our playgrounds over the coming months, this will provide a valuable resource for our children, sadly all doors have been closed to us - so we asked them to consider what support they could source!

And so after four hours of a socially distanced conversation in the cold making clear our points and with a plethora of reading materials sent to them that we had put together we waved them off but we hope both visitors will be able to go back to council and government to raise the issues discussed and continue to provide us and other school leaders with answers to the questions we continue to ask in order to provide what our children need and deserve.

As the doors close for the much needed half term break so that children and staff can recharge their batteries for another exciting half term to come, it is our duty to remind everyone that Havering is now at Tier 2 of COVID measures as a London Borough, which means we are at High rate for infection and we all know how hard we have all worked, especially over the past 7 weeks, it is vital that we continue to abide by the rules laid down before us as we can all agree it is vital for our children to remain in school if it is safe to do so and as the authorities campaign states – HELP US AVOID A LOCAL LOCKDOWN #DoingMyBit so a quick reminder of what HIGH alert means to us as families living in Havering - family households must not mix with other households indoors, this includes at cafes, coffee shops and restaurants. If going into shops wearing a mask is mandatory unless exempt from wearing one. If you are notified by track and trace or another authority to isolate you must do so, not leaving the home for 14 days and if symptoms were to develop a test is to be taken, it is vital members of our community tracked do adhere to these rule under as penalties are enforced.

Whilst the rules around COVID19 remain at the forefront of all our minds please be do remember that;
If you or someone you live with should display one of the three symptoms associated with the coronavirus, a high temp (hot to touch) new continuous cough, loss of taste or smell then your family must all self-isolate and the symptomatic person must take a test. If the result is positive then that person alongside members of the household must isolate for 14 days. By us all doing our bit the rate of transmission should reduce!

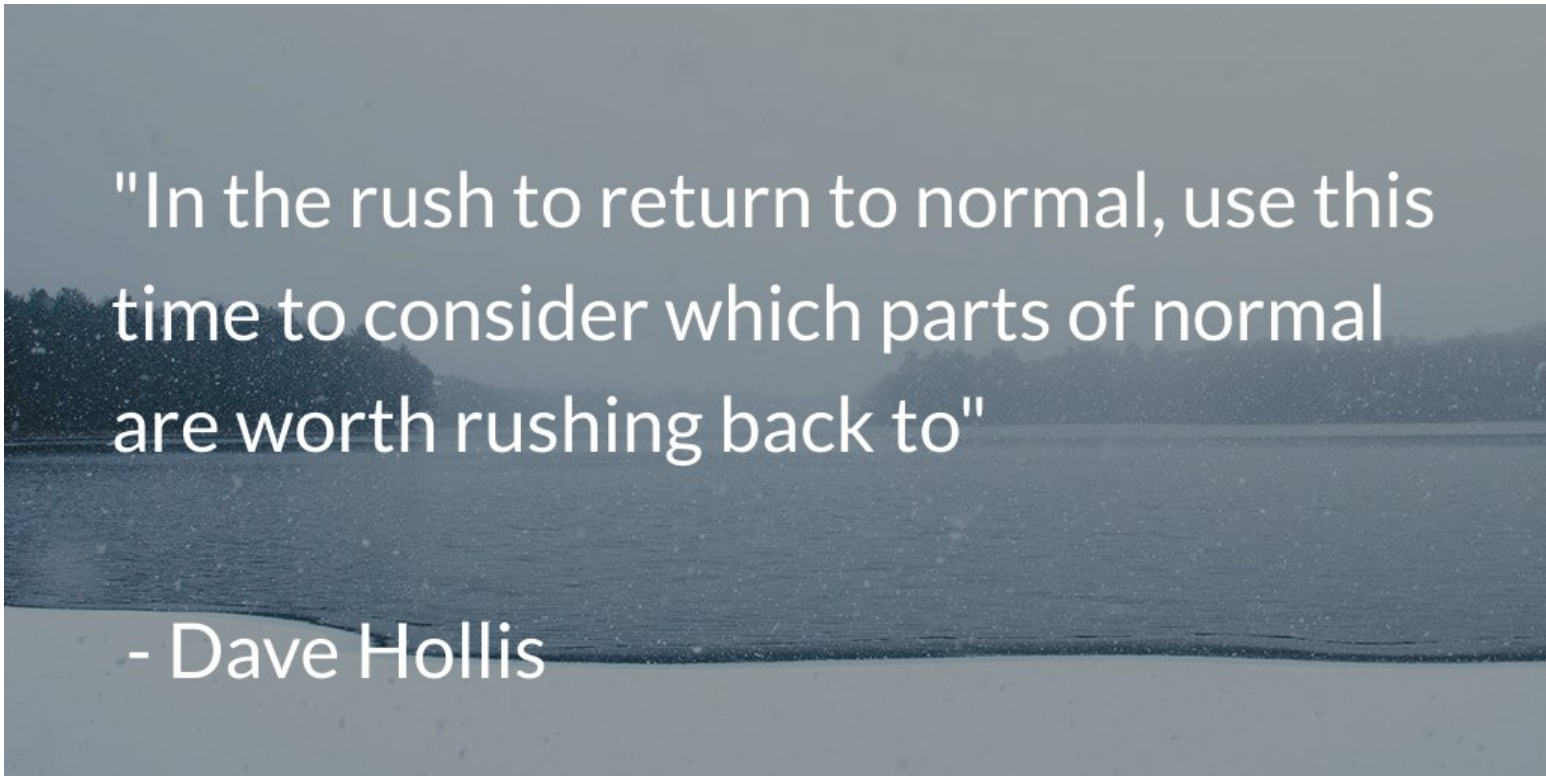
We wish to end by thanking our incredible staff teams across the Federation who have demonstrated continuous determination and sheer resilience and dedication since the lockdown begun but over the past 7 weeks have shown the true meaning of the vocation that is this wonderful profession of teaching. We are constantly grateful for the service to education they provide to our children, supporting our parental community safely, and each other they have shown daily each of our core values as we ALL continue to build our future together!

We hope you do enjoy the week together as families and look forward to seeing you on 2nd November in our masks / face coverings and no doubts brollies to!

Take care and stay safe team Towers,

Matthew, Laura and Catharine.

Mr M J Dineen, Ms L J Blurton, Mrs C D Hurley
Leaders of the Federation of Towers schools



PUMPKIN COMPETEITION

THANK YOU SO MUCH....

WE RECEIVED SO MANY FANTASTIC PUMPKIN COLOURING ENTRIES, MS BLURTON, MRS HURLEY AND MR DINEEN WERE PROVIDED WITH ALL ENTRIES WITH NAMES REMOVED AND WE ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING WINNERS! THEY WERE ASKED TO CHOOSE JUST ONE WINNER FOR EACH PHASE OF SCHOOL BUT WE AGREE WITH THEM THAT THIS WAS JUST TOO DIFFICULT! PRIZES WILL BE GIVEN TO 1ST PLACE WINNERS WITH CERTIFICATED FOR THE RUNNERS UP. SEE ATTACHED THE WINNING ENTRIES

NURSERY:

1ST PLACE: NOAH B

RUNNERS UP: YAQOUB A, ERIKAS K

INFANTS:

1ST PLACE: THEO S (KINGFISHERS)

RUNNERS UP - NERYSS K (TOUCANS); OLIVER G (STARLING)

JUNIORS:

1ST PLACE - MEGAN M (4A)

RUNNERS UP - ELSIE B (4T); SOPHIE G (4T)

THANK YOU ALSO SO MUCH FOR YOUR KIND AND GENEROUS DONATIONS FOR THE DRESS DOWN TODAY MONIES WILL BE COUNTED AND THE SCHOOLS WILL BE PURCHASING BOOKS WITH THE PROCEEDS! PHOTOS TO FOLLOW!

save the date

Join us for the **Big PTA Virtual Quiz** on **Friday 6th November, 6.30-8pm.** Prizes kindly donated by The Fat Pizza. Email us at towersparentsa@yahoo.com to book your place

Christmas Virtual Fayre - 28th November: Email us at towersparentsa@yahoo.com if you are interested in having a virtual stall. We are also desperately looking for raffle prizes, so please get in touch if you can help or know someone who maybe willing to donate!

Don't forget to complete the **Summer Sports Challenge** over the half-term - if you have already completed it, contact us via email to get your certificate and details on how to donate your sponsorship money.

THANK YOU TO F.O.T.F.A. AND TO YOU AS PARENTS!

As a school we wanted to make everyone in our community aware of how amazing you have been in supporting FOTFA over the past years and thanks to the monies you have raised at the different events the funds have been put to great use, and it is with this support that we are able to provide a range of resources! Through your kind donations we have most recently been able to provide our children with ....

- *Securing the purchase of the infant playground story chair and staging for class rehearsals*
- *Equipment for sensory rooms in both schools*
- *Emergency funding for resources needed to support education during COVID pandemic which includes;*
  - *Laptops x 3 @£460 = £1380 (three laptops are for use in communal areas of the junior school - upper school/lower school/Y6 block)*
  - *Cameras for every classroom x 16 @ £126 - £2016*
  - *Reading Eggs online reading platform to reduce the risk of transmission (3 Year Subscription) = £8,237.70*
  - *Replacing classroom projectors in two Junior classrooms x2 @ £475 = £950.00*

On behalf of the children.... Your generosity really does provide so much to us.... thank you sincerely!