

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL: HEADTEACHER'S BLOG – 20/11/20

Well, the big news of the week is that the Christmas Tree has arrived! Huge Huge Huge thanks to the PTA for sourcing this from Backford Christmas Trees and their contacts in Onward Living for funding it for us – our community care about us 😊

The lights and big SWITCH ON will take place on Monday evening and I plan on making a BIG fuss about it to be honest... we will film it so that all children can enjoy the event on the website and Twitter pages, in addition it will be sent to the local paper – NO children or parents I am afraid, but you will then see the lights on every day and enjoy the build up to Christmas (even the Year 2 bubble)!

On the topic of the isolating Year 2 bubble, it has been one heck of a week! I did tweet out a thank you and well done to all of the staff, parents and children in the bubble, who have really done well given the short notice and the impact of the reality of implementing the government expectations, but I am also writing to say well done here in my blog. Bravo one and all!!

It is such a shame that the government place such importance on testing children that their school day when isolating is intended to mirror almost exactly the school day when they are in school so that testing can carry on regardless (for Year 2 pupils this means Phonics the week they come back to school, and SATs in the summer) – despite the harsh reality that parents are in the main struggling, often with the reluctant consent of managers, to work from home just to be able to care for children, before you factor in the pressures of supervising them in learning (with the associated tech, printing, internet issues) etc.

I have simply said to everyone, focus on mental health, if you cannot accomplish the tasks set by teachers due to tech or work commitments, and everyone is getting anxious, stressed out and upset, don't! Work can be accessed over the two weeks and I would focus on registering (we have been told we must follow up on this), phonics (because this matters to your child being able to read) and maths. Manage what you can in the best way you can and stay safe! This goes for ANY bubble closure in the future also...

The complexities, and some of the anxieties of parents, have been quite pointed and I have tried to contact individuals concerned to discuss them but I would remind us all as a community, as this may be the first, but may not be the last, bubble closure, that life is tricky and interpreting guidance is also tricky.

Some parents have expressed disappointment with the parent of the child who has tested positive as they feel they have behaved in an irresponsible manner. This is not the community we are part of.

Our community is understanding and supportive and a child or a parent could have the virus and be asymptomatic and nobody would know it was being shared – this is one of the risks associated with schools remaining open and one of the contributory factors towards the spike in cases when schools returned in September. It is not for any of us to judge.

I know there is frustration that the parent continued to send her children into school whilst awaiting test results, as there is a feeling all of this could have been avoided, but I think that as I have said, a bubble closure was inevitable and speculating like this is no good for anyone – we must be supportive of one another and try to do our best as a community.

It is also futile for us to discuss who had the information first, whether that was on Instagram or class WhatsApp etc. There are also parents cross that I shared the message via Twitter on Sunday morning, despite the fact that it was through Twitter that I was first alerted, and simultaneously to this Tweet we were emailing and texting all parents, even then, despite 3 platforms, we had a child from that bubble arrive in school on Monday who hadn't received the information. Many parents don't check email, many don't have Twitter, and some were not on their phones on Sunday yet it was essential, **in order to try to stop the spread**, that we get the urgent message out to families who needed to immediately isolate their child as quickly as possible, as per PHE guidance – hence the belt and braces approach. These kinds of speculative and judgemental concerns don't help anyone to deal with a complex situation and one that could affect each of us, either as parents, or in our jobs, not once but many times in the coming months.

Below are some helpful links both to parents isolating, who may be able to get extra financial support, and those isolating who are struggling with mental health:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/incidents/coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-get-help/test-and-trace-support-payment.aspx> potentially, it is possible to claim up to £500.

This is the link to the gov site for mental health- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-support-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

We have also had some parent concerns about the PTA filming, and photo permissions, I want to stress that this is not compulsory. Your child will not be left out of the festivities, in fact not only will they still rehearse and practice the little festive things they have planned, but despite not being allowed to be filmed/photographed, they will be able to participate by doing a reading or sharing some of their art work, which will represent them on the film prepared. This is a fund raising activity and should be viewed in the same way as such. There is no blanket rule about the participation of all children in the actual film, but many parents had not updated their photo permissions anyway and Mrs Brown's email has given everyone a chance, particularly in view of the new way of remote learning and sharing that we had been forced to embrace through the C-19 issue, to review their thoughts.

Talking about photos, when you look back on the last year, we were all celebrating the visit to our school of **Force Atlantic** prior to their epic transatlantic row! One of the teachers and many of the children reminded me of this only today – a whole year. Who would have ever known the journey we would all have been on in that time? I wonder where they all are now and what they are doing, one thing is for sure, they wouldn't be doing this during the current lockdown!!



We raised a lot of money to support Force Atlantic, because Mrs Dutton and Miss Roberts and their classes last year really were inspired by them! And also we raised LOTS of money as a community for Red Nose Day and I had such a lovely email from them to say we were in their top 20 fundraising schools for the whole country from Red Nose Day 2019. We are, in fact, in their top 5 for primary schools across the country. Our children are often the ones who come up with the fundraising ideas and we love it that their desire to leave a legacy and really help is able to be harnessed by us as a school. It saddens me that this year, because of Covid, not only are our PTA struggling to find ways

to help raise funds for the niceties that they usually give us, but also as a community we are struggling to help raise money for charity – some families actually relying on charity to get by. If you are struggling, please do approach us so we can try to help – I realise that at times I can look and even be quite fierce, and some may even think me unapproachable, but I am completely invested in our school, the children and our families and want only the best for us all as we head into the darkest months, some of us in the darkest spaces in our own minds.

In slightly related news, the PTA have several things going in just now in addition to the film they are making- virtual raffles, and virtual Christmas fairs and all sorts so keep your eyes open for that, the main thing you make want to involve yourself with is the bauble idea – your child gets to place a wish in the bauble and hang it on our lovely outdoor tree!!!

One of our lovely parents has also won us a school showing of the iconic 'Snowman' – something wonderful for us all to enjoy (although I confess, I cannot see me finding time to watch the show when there is so much work to do...)