



Menston Primary School

St Peter's Way, Menston, West Yorkshire. LS29 6NY

Tel: 01943 873180

E-mail: office@menstonprimary.co.uk

Web site: www.menstonprimary.co.uk

Headteacher: Iain Jones BEd (Hons) NPQH

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Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well. I write to update you on how things are currently in school.

All staff have been in school this week preparing rooms and teaching areas for the return of Year 6 and other year groups as the term progresses. We have been planning and testing procedures and protocols and have been organising additional learning and hygiene resources which will keep children, staff and families safe as we begin to re-open.

Since lockdown we have worked hard to make progress in many areas of school development. We have managed to fully renovate and decorate the Victorian Hall and we have had the Care Club re-roofed. On the KS1 field we have installed a second track which gives access to the field all year round for outdoor learning and gives younger children another venue for the daily mile. The FoMPS funded polytunnel is now ready for use and several raised beds have been built to encourage young gardeners and growers. On the larger field we have improved the track by widening it near to the Learning Lodge. We have also created two all-weather class-size seating areas. The recently deepened pond is now home to a large number of froglets and we are seeing the return of newts.

On the larger field, newly planted alder and birch trees are attracting birds and other creatures to the site. Menston Primary School has outstanding resources to support outdoor learning which have been developed and enhanced over the years and, as our children return, we will make good use of these to keep our children happy, safe and healthy. The virus, as we all know spreads less outdoors and getting close to nature fosters emotional well being.

As we enter this new phase we have reviewed our home learning offer for all year groups and we think that the time is right to move towards a more 'blended learning' approach. In other words we are planning how we can use the available technology to improve communication and task setting for our home learners. We are thankful to those families who have given feedback to help us understand what is working well and what we might do differently. We have also been working with staff from our partner schools in the Wharfe Valley to share good practice and to find out what works best in other schools. As the term goes on, all class teachers will begin to use different virtual platforms for which we will need your consent, patience and help. I hope you will be able to work with us to make this successful.

We understand that these technologies provide opportunities for us to innovate and to grow as a school and we are very keen to do so. However, this is not just about lockdown

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and short term need. There is a need to lay solid foundations for our future digital development which will have a much longer lasting effect on learning in our school. We need to get this right. I hope families will trust us to work steadily, professionally and diligently towards this.

During lockdown, as well as running provision for Keyworker and vulnerable children, all school staff have completed a wealth of training including: keeping children safe under Covid-19, aspects of Personal, Social and Health Education and a range of SEND courses. They have also studied strategies endorsed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance which will help make our school an even happier and more tolerant place for children. An extensive portfolio of children's work has been gathered and curated by Mrs Dinsdale which will lead to the school gaining the Quality Mark for Geography which we will add to our other awards and kite marks recognising the quality of outdoor learning at Menston. At the same time other school staff have been working with Mrs Ellis our Assistant Headteacher to develop different subjects and to make innovations and improvements to our all-round curriculum planning.

We have also been busy recruiting two more very good teachers for the Autumn term. This will increase the number of teachers in school because no class teachers are leaving this summer. We have been able to increase staffing because The Government's National Funding Formula has finally recognised and acted on the historic underfunding of schools like ours.

We are living through strange and challenging times and we are all being tested in so many ways, but I am hugely optimistic about how the school is developing. On Monday we will welcome back most of our oldest children. We have worked with many of them since they were very small and we are very proud of them. Many of them have grown up here for nearly seven years and they are ready for high school. We now have them for six more precious weeks. We cannot wait.

As you will appreciate we are taking a cautious phased approach to the return of further year groups. We know that we will learn a lot about what is and is not possible once we have got our year 6 children back. We will be in touch with parents of children in Year 1 and Reception next week with more information about this.

Yours sincerely

Iain Jones
Headteacher

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