



## January 2021 - Welcome Back

Dear all,

Welcome back to everyone after the Christmas break. Not the welcome back for all that we were planning on or had hoped for but nevertheless!

I am sure that you will all agree, it was a bit of a roller-coaster during the first week of term. Last minute Government decisions followed by very little guidance or clarity led to a far from ideal transitional period to remote learning for most of our children. Despite this, I was once again incredibly proud of how our staff pulled together to implement our full remote learning offer in less than 24 hours.

I want to thank all of our parents for their patience and understanding while we move to a completely new way of working and I also want to thank you all for taking the time to read the larger number of email communications that came in a very short period of time. Your fast responses coupled with your understanding and support enabled us to put in place the very best provision possible for ALL children at Ashwell. It really has shown what can be achieved when we are all working together.

We are now in week 4 of this way of working and we continue to learn, review and tweak the finer details so that our offer can be as strong as possible. We know that we potentially have a sustained period of time working this way but staff now feel settled into a routine which will enable us to provide consistency.

We know that the Government's expectations of what schools offer and what children complete and achieve at home are high and we do understand why, however, we also stick by our school ethos and continue to prioritise the health and wellbeing of our children and their parents.



**As school is currently closed to most pupils with no known return date - All planned school events; trips etc. are currently postponed or cancelled.**

**Depending on circumstances and on when the school re-opens, we will endeavour to re-schedule as many cancelled events as we are able to.**

**Further information to follow.**

**15<sup>th</sup> Feb - Half Term**

We are carefully monitoring children's engagement at home and will continue to support families who are finding this period difficult. We want you to know that we have been hugely impressed with the high levels of engagement so far. You are all doing a truly wonderful job in exceptionally difficult times.

Later in this newsletter, I have attempted to answer some of the more frequently asked questions and enquiries that we have had over the last few weeks. I hope that you find this useful.

All that is left for me to say for now, is well done, keep up the hard work. We will soon all be back together again and begin our full recovery together in a stronger position than ever before!

Wishing you all the very best of health and hope to see you in the near future.

Mr S England  
Headteacher

## School Closure FAQs

**How did you choose which children could come to school?**

We applied the Government's guidance on Critical Workers and Vulnerable children. We invited the parents of children who fell into the categories to ask for a place for their child if they felt it essential to do so. This was done with a level of trust and the hope for honesty. Parents were asked their role and where it fitted into the critical worker list. Children deemed as vulnerable (the definition is broad) have been handled with sensitivity, parents were approached and invited to send their children in.

**Some parents work shifts or part-time, why are their children in every day?**

In order to create consistent bubbles and maintain minimal contact between staff and families, we asked parents to commit to bringing children in full time. This was to cause less emotional disruption for children and ensure staff can support them to access the remote learning we provide.

**How many Critical Worker and vulnerable children are there in school and what does provision for them look like?**

We currently have 85 out of our usual 225 children in school - this is 38% of the number of children on roll. Children are in their own year group bubble. The children in school are completing the same learning that is being accessed by the children at home. Staff are all in the school setting and responding to remote learning, holding Google meets and their time is split proportionately between those in school and at home.

**How does the number of children in school compare with the rest of the country?**

In a recent survey of Headteachers, it was found that:

14% of schools have between 0 - 20% of children in  
32% of schools have between 21 - 30% of children in  
36% of schools have between 31 - 40% of children in  
14% of schools have between 41 - 50% of children in  
4% of schools have over 51% of children in

**I am a critical worker and didn't apply for a place for my child, is it too late?**

You are still able to request a place for your child if you fall into any of the categories mentioned but this

will be reviewed on a case by case scenario. Our risk assessment states that class numbers are capped according to a number of factors such as the size of the classroom. Should your child's class be full, we are unable to accommodate the request. I would still urge parents to consider how essential the request for a place is and maintain that it is safer for your child at home. The measures taken of closing schools to most children were to lessen the contact being made between people. It is up to individual families to weigh up the consequences and risks of keeping children home or sending them into school.

**What are the risks of having more children in school?**

With more children in school, the number of children, families and staff in contact with each other increases. This could result in an outbreak of the virus that would spread further through the community than it would if there were less children in school. The likelihood of having to close bubbles due to positive cases is also heightened, resulting in the parents who are critical workers having to isolate for ten days, thus unable to fulfil their roles.

**Home learning is a struggle for us as we are both working fulltime, but I am not a critical worker. This doesn't feel fair.**

With so many places of work continuing to be open, less employers furloughing staff and those working from home expected to meet their usual targets and outcomes, it is no surprise that families are finding lockdown 3 a real challenge. We acknowledge this. We are all working to government rules, regulations and guidance, and with the purpose of this being to limit face to face contact with people this unfortunately also limits the support we can give you other than through the type of home learning we are providing.

**I worry about the impact being away from school will have on my child. What if they fall behind their peers?**

We are in worrying times. The mental health and wellbeing of your children needs to be the priority right now. Learning happens when children feel stable, are happy, secure and know they are loved. We have learnt a huge amount from the first lockdown. When we return to full time education children will be measured from their starting points and their personal and learning needs will be catered for.

## FAQs continued...

**I work all day so I can't support my child's learning between 9.00 and 3.00.**

Every family needs to find a way of balancing working and educating that works for them. We provide a structure for home learning that you are very welcome to adapt. If you need to alter the hours of learning, take breaks or adjust the activities then so be it. You are your child's primary carer; you know them the best. Some children learn concepts very quickly, others need to revisit concepts in small chunks of time over and over again. In class we personalise our approaches minute by minute throughout a lesson with up to 30 children; have the confidence to personalise the learning for your child. We trust you, and the work and outcomes of learning we have seen so far have been wonderful. We believe the approach to remote learning we have taken provides the flexibility to undertake learning when it is appropriate for your family, and accommodates the many different family groups we have along with the varying amounts of technology and devices you have.

## Attendance & COVID-19

Class	Number in School
Acorn (Nursery)	6
Oak (Reception)	12
Year 1	9
Year 2	8
Year 3	11
Year 4	15
Year 5	10
Year 6	14

## Health & Wellbeing Support

At school, we have a huge amount of information in the form of resources, website links, agencies and many other things to support those who feel they need help or support at this difficult time. We are very aware of how many emails you are getting at the moment and how much information there is to digest so rather than bombard you, **PLEASE GET IN TOUCH IF YOU WOULD LIKE THIS SENT.**

### WE ARE NOT IN THE SAME BOAT

I heard that we are all in the same boat,  
But it's not like that.

We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat.  
Your ship could be shipwrecked and mine might not be.  
Or vice versa.

For some, quarantine is optimal.

A moment of reflection, of re-connection, easy in flip flops, with a cocktail or coffee.

For others, this is a desperate financial and family crisis.

For some that live alone they're facing endless loneliness

While for others it is peace, rest and time with their mother, father, sons and daughters.

Some were concerned about getting a certain egg for Easter while others were concerned if there would be enough bread, milk and eggs for the weekend.

Some want to go back to work because they don't qualify for unemployment and are running out of money.

Others want to scream at those who break the quarantine.

Some are home spending hours a day helping their child with online schooling while

others are spending hours a day to educate their children on top of a 12 hour workday.

Some have experienced the near death of the virus, some have already lost someone from it and some are not sure if their loved ones are going to make it.

Others don't believe this is a big deal.

Some have faith in God and expect miracles during this 2020. Others say the worst is yet to come.

So, friends, we are not in the same boat. We are going through a time when our perceptions and needs are completely different.

Each of us will emerge, in our own way, from this storm. It is very important to see beyond what is seen at first glance.

Not just looking, actually seeing.

We are all on different ships during this storm experiencing a very different journey.

Let everyone navigate their route with respect, empathy and responsibility

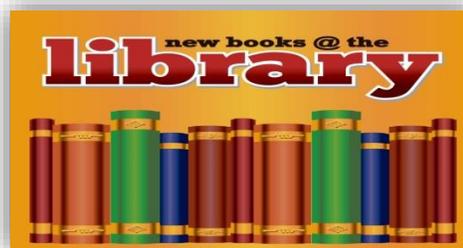
Anonymous



## Donate a Book to our Library

Book donations continue to come into the school from our wish list.

A huge thank you to everyone who has already purchased a new book for the school library. To see our children's wish list and to donate a new book please see: <http://amzn.eu/OR6HXLA>



## PTA Updates

Thank you to those who have made additional donations recently and to those who have handed in uniform for the second hand uniform shop.

Unfortunately, at the moment we are unable to plan any further PTA fundraising events. Remember you can still support the school by using the link below when shopping online:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/ashwellschool/>

Or by donating @

[www.Paypal.me/AshwellschoolPTA](http://www.Paypal.me/AshwellschoolPTA)



## Childhood Winter Illness

Now we are in winter many children may be experiencing common illnesses like coughs and colds. We know that some parents and carers aren't always sure what to do when their child is unwell. A new leaflet has been published to help them spot common winter illnesses and how they can treat their child at home.

It is also important they know where to go for medical advice when they need it and what to do in an emergency. We understand this can be a little confusing during the coronavirus pandemic. We'd like to reassure parents that the NHS is still providing safe care when they need it.

As well as providing clarity on where to go for medical advice, there is a host of information in the leaflet from how to treat colds and earache at home, to how to spot serious conditions such as meningitis and sepsis. There is also information on coronavirus.

<https://hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk/your-health-and-services/childrens-health/childrens-winter-illness>

## Blue Peter on YouTube

Blue Peter is the longest running kids TV show in the world and they are uploading videos to it that are suitable for 5-11 year olds. They have world record breaking challenges, arts and crafts, environmental videos, cooking and baking how tos, inspirational films, gaming, celebrity appearances, dance routines and music performances. They also feature ways of getting a Blue Peter badge, behind the scenes footage and extra content about their incredible presenters Adam, Lindsey, Mwaksy, Richie and Henry the Blue Peter dog.

If you think your child would be interested in this, please subscribe to <https://www.youtube.com/bluepeter>



## Music Achievements

Well done to Sam K (Year 6) who passed his Grade 2 Classical Guitar exam with a merit. He took this virtually before Christmas.



## The Ashwell Pantry

St Mary's Church - open every day 8:30am - 3:30pm  
The Ashwell Pantry has been a valuable resource for many since the beginning of lockdown last year. If you need anything, please help yourself from the well-stocked tables - or help others in the village, when you're able to by donating. Non-perishable and long life goods are always greatly appreciated. A list of preferred donations is updated regularly and displayed in the church.

Please drop-off your items using the donations boxes in St Mary's Church and Ashwell Village Store.

## Families First Support

Coronavirus: How to keep children healthy, happy, learning and entertained at home

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Here is your free e-copy of Family First magazine, packed full of information to help keep children happy, learning & entertained at home during lockdown- We hope it helps in some way.

Please click on the link below:

[https://issuu.com/sevenstarmedia/docs/ff\\_issue\\_7\\_digital211220](https://issuu.com/sevenstarmedia/docs/ff_issue_7_digital211220)



## Nursery & Reception Admission Arrangements

As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic we are unable to run our school tours and open mornings in the usual way. We know how important this time is for you. Please visit our admissions page for full details:

<https://ashwell.herts.sch.uk/our-school/admissions/>

Alternatively you may wish to view our virtual school tour here:

<https://poly.google.com/view/cOeYuUEiQOP>

### Reception - September 2021 Intake

The Reception admission deadline has now passed

### Nursery - September 2021 Intake

Application opens - 4.1.21

Deadline for applications - 5.2.21

Allocation Day - 26.2.21

All Nursery admissions via:

[On-Line Application Form](#)

## IndusTRY AT HOME!

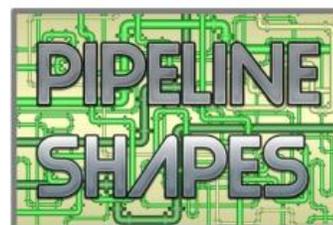
### Industry at Home - Science

Following huge success with previous IndusTRY at home activities, the next two are now available:

What's in a Mince Pie?

Pipeline Shapes

Why not give it a go: <http://ciec.org.uk/industry-at-home.html>



### Premier Education - Wellbeing

Premier Education are working in partnership with us to offer pupils an exciting 'Wellbeing' Virtual lesson delivered by Premier Education. Experienced and qualified staff will be hosting a series of Wellbeing virtual lessons that our school community can have FREE access to.

The popular Wellbeing programme focuses on healthy living and lifestyles. It will allow pupils to explore the fundamentals of 'Eat well, Drink well, Move well and Sleep well'. The session will be suited for all ages.

It will be every Wednesday until February half term.

Parents can tune in to the session via our Facebook Live platform. Both can be found on Premier Educations Facebook page - [Please like and Follow Premier Education - Norfolk & North Suffolk](#).

## Wellbeing Wednesday

Zoom/Facebook Live tutorial with our qualified instructors

EPISODE 3: Wednesday 27th

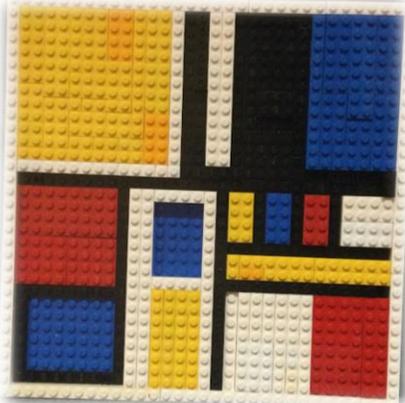
11am - 11.45am

STAY ACTIVE LIVE



### Celebrating Remote Learning

Have a look at some of the fantastic art work Year 3 have created based on the work of the artist Mondrian.



### School Closure Notification System

When the decision is made to close the school, a message will be entered on the Everbridge system and **ALL** staff/parents/interested parties that have signed up to it will get both a text and email notifying them of the closure.

To sign up please go to:

**member.everbridge.net/index/892807736725489**  
(you will have to copy and paste it into the URL bar) and click the "Sign Up" button at the top right hand side of the page on the grey strip, from there follow the instructions.

**INCLEMENT  
WEATHER  
INFORMATION**



### Staff COVID-19 Testing

From Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January, staff will be testing themselves at home twice a week. For most staff this will be a Sunday and Wednesday evening.

Just like a positive PCR COVID test, if an adult within school does test positive on their LFD test, we will have to take the necessary action. A confirmatory PCR test will take place and we will contact Public Health to assisting them with contact tracing. It is highly likely that it will lead to class bubble closures and self-isolation.

We will endeavour to communicate with you as quickly as we can, however I would strongly recommend that parents who have children that are currently attending school have a contingency plan (alternative childcare arrangements, in line with national restrictions) in the event of their child's bubble closing at short notice.

