8th January 2021

Dear Parents

Thank you to all those of you who are keeping our country going as critical workers. We are indebted to the many of you who provide care; are sustaining our food supplies and distribution; ensuring that the country's infrastructure does not collapse; and working with those who are sick. Apologies if I haven't mentioned your particular role in this pandemic - more due to my ignorance of the key roles than lack of gratitude.

Of course, I also wish to thank educators, especially everyone who is working so very hard within Harting School. I am blessed, as a head teacher, to have a very special and dedicated team. Not one member of staff has refused to take the risks to themselves - they have all come into work uncomplaining. They deeply care about your children!

As things have evolved over the week, it has become evident that we have a substantial number of parents within our school community who are critical workers. This has meant that many of you have applied for places for your children at school. **I ask, however, that you consider how much time you need your child to be here as large numbers of people together impact on the safety of the community.**

The latest advice from the government, which came out early this evening (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision), asks that children stay at home if possible (even if their parents are key workers): 'Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college **if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.'**

If therefore, you have other adults at home I ask that you keep your children there full-time. Equally, if you have a part-time role, the children remain with you on your days off. I understand that everyone is under pressure and there are individual family circumstances which make things extremely hard but we all deserve a chance of staying well.

Not only do we wish to keep everyone healthy but there are risks to the children's learning. To spell it out, if staff go off with COVID (or for any other reason eg self-isolation, other events) we will struggle to offer education, even remotely.

Regarding home learning, we are delighted that the daily work is going down well and that it is easier to manage with specific websites to link to the learning focuses - it is taking a lot of the teachers' energy. We hope to be able to 'zoom' out of school and speak with children at home next week too. This will, of course, be dependent on the IT working! Please remember to be in the background (but not involved), when your child is on a class zoom call, so if anything untoward should occur you can support your child. Clearly, we would shut a meeting down immediately if a problem occurred.

Thank you for all the encouraging and supportive messages we have received this week – they are appreciated.

Please take care and stay safe.
Best wishes
Fiona