Mrs Sarah Wright
Deputy Headteacher

Ickleford Primary School

Shared Values · Shared Aspirations · Shared Achievements

Mrs Sue Dury
Headteacher

….. A Church of England School …….

January 2021

Dear Parent,

Welcome back to what is likely to be another challenging year – educationally, and more broadly. The latest lockdown has forced all schools to amend rapidly their plans for the present term, and while the Prime Minister has indicated an aspiration for rules to be relaxed after half-term there is no guarantee that this will occur.

Ickleford Primary School has published its remote learning policy, and you should all have received a copy. The principles which underpin the policy have been discussed at various governors' meetings during the autumn term, and the policy was signed off by me over the Christmas break.

The feedback from parents on how the school is managing the latest lockdown has been largely, but not exclusively, positive. Some parents have heard of other primary schools which are offering 'live' lessons to pupils who are unable to attend school under the new lockdown regulations, and do not understand why we are not doing the same. Parents' questions on this are understandable, and ones that I would likely have asked had I been in their position.

It is important to note that 'live' lessons are not statutory; schools are only obliged to include recorded or live teaching sessions through a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally. Pre-recorded lessons, for example White Rose Maths, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content, and can be very effective.

We have a fully functional digital platform for remote education provision that is now being used consistently across school to allow DfE-expected interaction, assessment and feedback.

Nonetheless, if there was research data to support the importance of live streaming of lessons, I believe the school would have worked hard to deliver these, and I would have supported them in doing so. However, there is good evidence from independent education experts that the **content** of the material being provided for pupils to learn remotely is more important than the **manner in which lessons are delivered**.

Each setting is unique. At Ickleford, because we have a significant number of children attending under government criteria for critical workers and vulnerable children, we cannot staff nor find the physical space to offer parallel live lessons and in-class teaching. Even so, I

believe that the blended approach that we offer for remote learning is a good way of progressing education during these incredibly difficult circumstances.

The feedback received from a vast number of parents who engaged in remote learning during the first lockdown was that they appreciated flexible learning opportunities which they can manage around their own work commitments and older children's schooling expectations, as well as the need to share devices and bandwidth.

As with most things, there will be some members of our community who are not satisfied with the arrangements on offer. It is quite right that you want to maximise your child's educational potential and to minimise the impact that lockdown is having on it, and most have raised their thoughts in a fair manner. However, a handful of comments have, in my opinion, crossed the line. It is as though those few parents have a mental image of teachers sitting in the staff room with their feet up, asking themselves: "what is the absolute minimum we can get away with?"

I have had an association with this school for nearly 25 years, first as a parent and then as a governor. In that time, staff have routinely gone above and beyond what is expected of them in the education and pastoral care of their pupils. I know that this is even more so now, with staff regularly working extra hours at school and at home. For example, our teachers dedicated a full seven days last week to the teaching and learning of all our pupils. And they did so at not insignificant health risks to themselves and their families. If my children were still pupils at Ickleford Primary School, and if I felt as a few parents appear to do, that the school was deliberately short-changing my children, I would consider finding a different school which might better suit my expectations, and in which I had greater trust.

The feedback from staff is that almost all families have engaged with our remote learning provision and school has worked closely with families who have not found this easy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents for their resilience and flexibility at this testing time. I am fully aware of the drastic impact Covid-19 lockdown is having on everyone, and extend my thanks to the whole school community for what they are achieving.

Best wishes,

Miles Maxwell,
Chair of Governors, Ickleford Primary School