



Awliscombe C of E (VA) Primary School
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Head of School: Mr Nick Bladon

The FORT Federation

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Penny Hammett

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope that this letter finds you safe and well during this very strange time. As we move into this new phase with our schools opening for more groups of children, we felt that it would be good time to write to you. I am sure like me you have been pleased to hear from Mrs Hammett about how the first week of some additional Reception and Year 1 children being back in our schools has gone. We are learning along the way and tweaks will be made as needed and as advised by the Government.

As a Governing Body we would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Hammett, Mr Bladon, Mrs Morris and all the staff of the Fort Federation for the dedication and professionalism that they have shown in this difficult time. I would also like to thank all of you for the support that our staff have received in letters, phone calls and cheery socially distanced waves from your houses when workbooks were delivered!

We wanted to let you know what has been happening behind the scenes at Fort Federation. As you are aware schools in the UK closed to most pupils in the middle of March, the Government also chose at this time to suspend the National Curriculum and cancel all examinations, including the SATs that our Year 2 and Year 6 pupils would have taken. As a Governing Body we have followed guidance from the National Governors Association to set up regular meeting and communication with Mrs Hammett. Our focus has been on the expected provision, safeguarding and wellbeing, all in line with Government guidance.

The decision to provide paper workbooks for our pupils was made by following Government guidance to meet the needs of our community and based on a survey that showed that internet access and ICT provision was not available for all our families. Information from the Department for Education suggested that online lessons were not an expectation and that it was important to not experiment with technology not already known by the students or staff. The Government advised that the work that students are expected to complete should not be new learning, but a revision of skills and knowledge already delivered within school, this work should take pupils no more than 2-3 hours per day to complete. We also recognised that some pupils may have to complete the work alone as parents may be having to work from home and are not always in a position to support their child's learning. During this period children of keyworkers were offered places in school purely for childcare, they were completing the same workbooks as the children remaining at home. Staff have been in school on a rota system and pulling together and planning workbooks for future home learning throughout this time.

With the Governments announcement that Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils should return to school from the 1st June, Governors met with Mrs Hammett to discuss the implications for Fort Federation. Mrs Hammett, Mr Bladon and Mrs Morris have drawn up robust Risk Assessments and plans for both schools in preparation for the children to come back into school. We had hoped to invite Year 6 pupils into school first as they might be best able to adhere to the social distancing guidance. Unfortunately, the Government guidance meant that we had to prioritise Reception and Year 1 pupils first. As has all been outlined in Mrs Hammett's previous letters there have been challenges in preparing the classrooms for the "bubbles" or groups of children, and their allocated teacher, alongside the children of Key Workers who will continue to attend. At this time, we continue to support our school leaders as they work towards having Year 6 back into school if possible. We are all very much looking forward being able to celebrate all the wonderful individuals in Year 6 in their last weeks with us.

Now that some children are able to come back into school the government has advised that schools should focus on the emotional health and wellbeing of our children. The National Curriculum is still suspended and the expectation for home learning remains the same as outlined above. We continue to emphasise the value of daily reading and making learning fun. We and the School staff understand that you and your children may be concerned about what will happen when all children return to school and you may be concerned that the children in classes may all be at different levels and have accessed different amounts of learning during this time. This is a problem that will be faced in all schools nationally in September and beyond. The Government are aware of this and we await their guidance on how this is to be managed in due course. If you or your child are really concerned about this, then I would encourage you to call the school and speak to a member of staff. There is a lot of support available locally and although we are continuing to isolate to some extent there is no need to face any worries alone.

Thank you very much for reading this long letter! I hope that it has provided you all with a clear picture of what we have been doing and will continue to do. Mrs Hammett and the staff always welcome communication and feedback from you. Thank you for your continued support for the Fort Federation and well done for juggling working from home, home-schooling (who knew Year 4 maths was so tricky), caring for your families emotional wellbeing and surviving the toilet paper crisis of 2020!

Best Wishes,

Emily Meek Chair of Governors and the whole Governing Body.