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Dear Parents/Carers

Well, what a term! I am sure many of you will be pleased to have arrived at the end of what has been a very busy and challenging period. For me, as Headteacher, this term has probably been one of the most challenging of recent times. It has certainly been an incredibly difficult time for staff, all of whom have done an amazing job of stepping up, covering staff absence and battling on, despite having to manage their own recovery from COVID, anxieties about the virus, and contend with other seasonal lurgies. On some days this term, as many as 25% of the staff have been ill at any one moment. Yet, despite this, we have been able to continue with provision and provide consistency for the children. I am personally much relieved that we have not had to close the school and return to on-line learning. I am also particularly relieved that, despite the difficulties that us grown-ups have had to face, the children have been generally happy and have not missed out on too many of the opportunities that this term presents. Significantly, pupil well-being seems to be in a good place.

However, as we go in to the new term, our assessments of pupils' learning show that COVID, overall, continues to have significant impact on attainment and progress. Like many schools, episodes of pupil and teacher absence, and periods of learning away from school, have left their mark. Whilst the profile is different for every child, for most, there are still key skills and knowledge not yet fully embedded. In the new year, then, we look forward to working together to 'plug the gap'. Naturally, we will do our utmost to ensure your child catches up to meet national expectations across the curriculum.

On practical matters pertaining to COVID, the intention – and hope – is that we can return to one whole-school bubble. But this will very much depend on the virus in the community and the picture nationally. I will eagerly wait for, and respond to, the Department for Education and Local Authority advice. Experience tells us that this sometimes comes at short notice, so please bear with us in this regard. It would be helpful if your child returns to school in January only if they are fit and well. You may choose to undertake a lateral flow test (LFT) before they return on Wednesday 5th January, 2022. It would be lovely to know that we are all starting the term virus-free. Staff will continue to take twice weekly lateral flow tests.

On our return, Epiphany will be in full swing and the children will be spending the first few days in school exploring the concept, a now established tradition at Horsley C of E Primary. The hope, too, is that we can all attend the panto on Thursday 6th January! You may have heard in the media about London shows being cancelled due to COVID. We won't know for sure, however, until the start of the new term. We will keep you updated accordingly, although this may well be at short notice. Fingers and toes crossed!



On a separate matter, it is important to let you know that, in the new year, I will typically not be in school on Tuesdays as I have been temporarily seconded to the Local Authority in an advisory capacity. Mr Feldon has been promoted to Acting Headteacher for the day that I am not in school; do contact him in my absence. I would like to personally congratulate Mr Feldon, and extend my congratulations on his recent completion of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

In the new term we also welcome Miss Ind-Smith, who will be joining the team in the infants. Miss Ind-Smith brings a wealth of experience and will provide extra support for the Infant team.

So, as we head into the holidays, stay safe. May God bless you and I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.

Yours faithfully



Mr Price
Headteacher

