



Neroche Community Primary School
Broadway, Near Ilminster
Somerset, TA19 9RG

Telephone
01460 52664

Headteacher
Mrs Alison Collins
BEd Hons, NPQH

**Deputy
Headteacher**
Miss Jessica Millard



School Website : www.neroche.somerset.sch.uk

School email: sch.067@educ.somerset.gov.uk

Sunday 3rd January 2021

Dear Parents

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your patience while a very difficult and confusing situation evolved regarding schools over the weekend. The weekend has brought with it mixed messages and a lack of clarity for parents and an influx of information in the press and on social media about Education Unions and their involvement with the Government.

I wanted to wait until I contacted you all to reduce any further confusion and so you received clarity in the information sent out. You will all no doubt, have mixed feelings about the proposed return to school and this communication will not be met with the same response across all our Neroche households. Please can I reinforce that it is ok for different families to have different viewpoints and we need to work together as a school community to keep everyone as safe as possible. Please respect other people's points of view moving forward and remember that we are all doing our very best in very difficult circumstances.

Neroche will remain open to all children from Tuesday 5th January. Not all staff will be working on site and we will need to be creative in our use of staff to ensure we can remain open. Some classes will not have their regular class teacher on site but please be assured that class teachers are very much working and will still be planning and preparing the lessons and providing feedback to the children while remaining at home. Class teachers will still be available via class emails to maintain contact with parents. Please do not use the class email facility to challenge individual staff on their decision to remain at home. Individual teachers have made decisions based on a number of factors and their absence has been authorised at this time in line with the Union advice.

In an attempt to reduce the number of bubbles school adults are mixing with we have had to again be creative in our use of staff and so children may have a change of support staff working with them. This has been a difficult decision but a necessary one to keep the staff as safe as possible; reduce the number of bubbles who potentially need to isolate while maintaining vital support to the children that need it the most across the school. I thank you in advance for your understanding with this and know it is not an ideal solution but one that needs to be taken to keep the school open for all as safely as possible.

Although, we have been able to remain open from Tuesday 5th January, we need you to realise that we are working in very difficult circumstances. We have very little capacity to cover staff absence, especially now we are limiting the class bubbles that staff come into contact with. Sadly, this limited staff capacity could inevitably lead to future partial closures for individual classes and potential timetable disruptions to lunch breaks in an attempt to keep classes open and so classroom adults can have a break. We ask for your patience and understanding in this. We will of course do our best to seek supply cover for teacher absence to reduce any closures but this is in very high demand at the moment. We will not be seeking to cover support staff absence as there is little in the way of resources to be able to cover these absences without mixing bubbles.

Uffculme Academy Trust, Chapel Hill, Uffculme, Devon. EX15 3AG

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Sadly, we have also had to postpone all Forest School sessions for this half term to ensure class bubbles remain with the same adults as much as possible. SEN and Catch Up interventions will continue with classroom adults only and mixed interventions will not be happening for the foreseeable future with the exception of the morning nurture group which individual children are invited to.

The only mixed bubble situation that is out of our control is our breakfast and after school childcare provision. We urge parents to only use these clubs for childcare to enable them to work. Places are limited and so please bear this in mind when booking your child in. We are not able to go over the number to ensure we can do our best to socially distance the children. We will do our best to keep different year groups apart at these clubs but this cannot be guaranteed and parents need to be mindful of this when making bookings. Staff working in these clubs will also be working across different bubbles which is not ideal at all and so they will have the opportunity to wear a clear visor as a level of protection in recognition of this. Mr Bourne, I know has also contacted parents regarding his football club and please liaise directly with him regarding this and not via the school.

In light of now moving into Tier 4 we have made the decision that face coverings must be worn by parents and carers when accessing the Neroche school site. So, if you enter the school gates, pre school gate or foyer in the morning and at the end of the day from Tuesday 5th January, we politely request that you wear a face covering. Staff on the gates, front and classroom doors will also have the opportunity to wear a face covering due to the interaction they may have. We have held off on the request for face coverings as we have wanted the school site to feel as normal as possible for the children. Face coverings, are however now part of children's daily lives and they are used to seeing adults wearing them and so we have made this decision and hope you will support this and help to protect our wider community. Please remember that some adults have exemption from wearing face coverings and so please resist challenging each other on this if you see someone without a face covering as they may have a valid reason and exemption from doing so. Please also resist communicating with school staff if you have seen someone without a face covering, we are asking for everyone's help in this but do not hold any power to enforce. Staff will continue to wear face coverings when they walk between areas of the internal school site and when they are using communal staff areas.

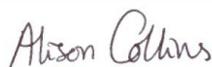
Parents will continue to be able to access the external school site but we ask you to take advantage of the extended drop off and pick up times to reduce the number of parents on site at any one time. Please do not use the school site or school gate areas as a social area, again so we can reduce numbers of people gathering in one area. Can I also remind pre school parents that this extends to the Pre school as well. Please wear a face covering as soon as you enter the wooden gate by the buggy store and say goodbye to your child at the front door and utilise the waving window to say goodbye to them. We are not able to let you into the setting and pre school staff will help your child with their belongings. We appreciate this isn't easy but it is a necessity to keep everyone safe.

As additional reassurance, and as a result of our recent conversion to the Uffculme Academy Trust, all Neroche staff will be offered Lateral Flow testing via Holyrood. Staff testing is not common place in Primary Schools with Secondary schools having priority but we are able to utilise this facility for our Neroche staff as we are now part of the same Academy Trust. This access will also limit the number of staff absence due to COVID and will negate the need for staff self-isolation if they have been in contact with a confirmed COVID case as they can receive daily testing in place of self isolation.

I can only apologise for the last minute communication to you all. I hope you are aware that this isn't intentional and we can only respond when we have received clarity from the Government.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming the children back on the 5th January and hope that you have had a healthy start to 2021.

With best wishes



Alison Collins
Headteacher

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