



Friday 7th January 2021

Dear parents/carers,

I am writing to you at the end of the first week of a new term- it seems to have sped past !! This week's letter will provide you with some information on some initiatives.

Home Study Support

KCC are working with the Invicta Academy to provide home study sessions for pupils in year 5 and 6. This is a pilot project and I have contacted them to sign our Aspire schools up for this opportunity. Further information is below.

The concept is weekly, virtual live teaching sessions, which pupils can drop in to if they have a homework problem they are stuck on, or an area of learning they have missed or are struggling with. In light of feedback from Phase 1 of the pilot, each session will have a published focus, which will enable schoolteachers to encourage individual pupils to join a relevant session, and for pupils and parents to identify sessions that they feel are relevant to them. The unique element of this support is that pupils are actively encouraged to bring with them (or submit in advance) a question they are stuck on.

It is pleasing from Phase 1 that a number of pupils regularly attended. Feedback indicates children found the teachers approachable and enjoyed interacting via the Q&A function. Key stage 2 children particularly enjoyed using the microphone to ask questions. Some participants had their learning extended after solving their initial homework questions. Parents have stated they want these virtual sessions to continue. However, Phase 1 demonstrated the capacity to help more pupils, thus we are looking for more schools to join the pilot and promote it to their relevant families.

Programme

- 60 mins maths home study support followed by 60 mins English study support for primary pupils in years 5 & 6 (Upper Key Stage 2) on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Once I have heard back from the Invicta Academy I will write again with more details for those parents who would like their children to be involved in the study sessions.

Financial support for families from KCC

KCC are also offering some financial support for families to either help with rent or Mortgage arrears or utility bill debt. The aim of this support is to help families stay in their own homes. More information is below and a leaflet is attached to this letter.

The Kent Housing Group (KHG) has secured £2.5m in a recent Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) bid to Kent County Council. Each local housing authority in the County receives £175,000 to support families by tackling rent arrears and the adverse financial affects suffered due to the pandemic.

Maidstone Borough Council's Homelessness Services is using the money to try and stop tenants from the private rented sector, people in social housing and owner occupiers becoming homeless. The Service is able to:

- Pay some rent and mortgage arrears
- Help with debts on utility bills and Council Tax
- Provide support to help families stay in their homes

If a parent is a Maidstone resident and at risk of losing their home, they should visit www.maidstone.gov.uk/housing for advice, information and details of how to contact the Housing Advice Team.

COMF funding is time limited and has to be spent by 31 March 2022, so please inform parents that they should contact Maidstone Borough Council as soon as possible for help if it is needed. Attached is a leaflet for you to give to parents/display as you feel appropriate.

If a parent is a landlord with tenants that have fallen into rent arrears, they should visit www.support-for-kent-landlords.co.uk.

New Staff

This week we have welcomed two new Aspire staff.

Ms Liddicoat our active learning lead teacher and PE subject leader. She will be working across Aspire providing active learning interventions, running after school clubs and sports competitions.

Mr Picot will be working with Mr Jackson to provide the caretaking and site management across Aspire. Mr Picot will also be providing IT support.

We have also welcomed new teachers and teaching assistants this term.

Welcome all to Team Aspire !

Covid guidelines

I wrote to all parents and carers on Tuesday regarding the current covid guidelines. A summary is below for your reference.

Covid Guidance at all Aspire Schools

The following will be in place:

- Parents and carers should not be in the school building unless they have an appointment
- All visitors to school are asked to take a lateral flow test and bring it with them. They must also wear a face covering
- Windows will be open in all classrooms ensuring that the carbon dioxide monitors remain green/ amber
- Children will be asked to wash their hands at regular intervals
- Staff will be wearing masks in shared/central areas
- Staff/ children who show any symptoms will be moved to an area of the school and then asked to go home and test for covid.
- If a lateral flow test is positive, the staff member or pupil must isolate and book a PCR test if possible - Lateral flow tests can be taken on day 6 and 7 of isolation and the person can return to school on day 8 if both are negative. If still testing positive the 10 days isolation must be completed
- Children and double vaccinated staff can attend school if a member of their household has tested positive, but must take a lateral flow test every day for 7 days. These tests must be negative for them to attend school.
- Staff will be given time where needed to attend vaccination or booster appointments
- Each head of school, in discussion with me, has the right to put into place any additional measures if cases are identified.

Remote Education

We will only move to remote education where the number of cases or the staff absence means we have no choice. The expectations of remote education were sent out last term.

I hope you all have enjoyable family weekends. I shall be celebrating my grandsons first birthday tomorrow - that year has flown by !

Kind regards,

Emma Hickling
Executive Headteacher
Aspire Federation

