

Frettenham Primary School
Hainford Primary School
Horsford Primary School
Old Catton Junior School
White Woman Lane School
St. Faiths' Primary School



Nebula
where stars are born

Ashley Best-White
Executive Headteacher

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Dear Parents and carers

The weeks seem to be flying past and as we head towards the end of October, autumn has really hit us with a change in weather and temperature. The Department of Education has confirmed that the guidance requiring schools to keep some windows open to provide ventilation, despite the weather getting cooler, remains firmly in place. So our windows remain open, the heating is turned on in order to balance a reasonable temperature and staff and children are asked to layer their clothing. Perhaps even wear a vest!?

As we come towards the end of the first half of the autumn term, I would like to, once again, thank everyone for their support and cooperation during such a difficult time and also to highlight a few things.

Remote learning

Unfortunately, given the ongoing situation with COVID-19, all schools are having to consider how they would cope in case of a class or year group self-isolating at any point and how they would provide remote learning to absent pupils which would closely align with the school's curriculum. We want to be able to react as quickly as possible if some pupils have to spend time at home and we have received a comprehensive set of guidelines from the government to comply with.

During lockdown, the schools developed a variety of different ways that work would be provided. We had not had any time at this stage to consider the approach to take.

Over a year ago, the decision was taken to invest a significant amount of money in each of our schools to provide 'state of the art' IT equipment and resources to facilitate high quality teaching and learning in the classroom interfacing with the new, up to date interactive whiteboards and making our systems as flexible and portable as possible. This gave us the ability to teach in more exciting and creative ways and utilise all the resources available to us to bring learning alive to children in their classrooms. All the curriculum resources in the schools for pupils where possible were also upgraded. As a result, we all became Microsoft 365 schools and phase 2 of this programme is now beginning with further new Microsoft devices for pupil use ordered and being delivered to all of the schools.

Of course, this was all planned before we knew we would be required to facilitate a remote learning platform, but having purchased Office 365, we now need to find ways to make it work as well as possible for everyone, learning at school and from home when necessary.

Microsoft Teams and Assignments

As you will be aware from letters the schools have recently sent home, we have set up the majority of pupils in our schools with email accounts and passwords so they can access Microsoft Teams. Our

reception children will continue to use Tapestry. This will be the key way in which we will be sending out work and contacting children/families in circumstances where children, in a bubble, class or year group, or even the whole school, have to self-isolate at any point.

The use of Teams is solely educational and will be used to support remote education as and when the need arises. We are currently practising how the system works by sending home some assignments or simple tasks for you all to try and access and complete and by putting links to video guides on our websites to support this process. We will also be using Teams to send out some homework assignments so the children become increasingly familiar with the platform. School staff are experimenting with the platform and undertaking training and exploring how it can be used with the wide range of devices available to pupils in our schools.

Thank you to all the parents/carers who have already supported their children to access Microsoft Teams and complete a simple assignment. Vital for our younger children in particular is to practise logging in with their user name and password, which have already been sent home. It would be really helpful if everyone could have a go at doing this as it will enable us to find out who is having difficulties accessing Teams at home.

Parent/Teacher Assertive Mentoring meetings

We had hoped to be in a position where we would be able to provide some face-to-face meetings for our autumn half term assertive mentoring meetings. However, the national updated guidance still requires us to complete these parent meetings remotely. Therefore, our arrangements for parent/teacher meetings will have to be run very differently this year. The schools will be providing information soon regarding each teacher's available time slots and how parents/carers can book a ten-minute video call appointment. Again, this will be organised using Microsoft Teams. For parents who would prefer a telephone call, this can also be arranged. Further details will be sent out shortly.

Ten minutes is never very long for an appointment and this year many of our pupils were off school for a long period of time. We are all missing those opportunities we used to have to touch base with parents/carers and we have not been able to hold our normal Assertive Mentoring meetings at the beginning of term. For these reasons, we will be sending a copy of the completed Assertive Mentoring form in advance of the virtual meetings/telephone calls in order to focus the meeting on the current situation regarding your child's learning, behaviour and attitude given the long period of lockdown. Of course, the meeting will also provide you with the opportunity to let us know if you have any current concerns alongside anything else you think it would be important for us to know.

Due to the amount of children in each class, these meetings are limited to 10 minutes per child. We will need to ensure that none of them run over 10 minutes, as when we are using Teams, there will be people in the virtual waiting room who will need to be admitted promptly for their meeting. Please do not be offended when your child's teacher ends the meeting promptly. If you would like to have a longer discussion with your child's teacher, please do book another meeting with them, at a time and date convenient to you both.

As this is something new to us, I have my fingers firmly crossed that all works smoothly, but please do be prepared for glitches, and understanding in the unlikely event of anything happening on the evening. Should there be an error affecting your meeting, the class teacher will continue to work through their timetabled meetings, and will contact you to rearrange.

We are hopeful that all the appointments for the meetings can be booked by the end of the week commencing 2nd November, which will then be available over the subsequent couple of weeks.

Parent Governor

There is a vacancy for a parent governor on the governing board of the federation. If you would like to speak to a governor about the role before deciding to stand for election, please let your Head of School know, and we will arrange for a governor to contact you.

Free School Meals

Sadly, many people's work circumstances have changed due to the pandemic. If you are in receipt of Income Support, Employment Support Allowance (Income Related), Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) or Guaranteed Pension Credit, you may be eligible for free school meals. It is important to sign up for free school meals, even if your child brings a packed lunch from home or your child is in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and automatically receives a free school meal due to the government's scheme for all Reception / Key Stage 1 pupils. Please apply online;

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/school-meals-and-milk>

Should you receive confirmation of your eligibility, please confirm this to your child's school as soon as you can. Do not assume the school will be told!

The Nebula Federation has fabulous committed staff who have really worked together during this unprecedented time and I am incredibly grateful to them. They are working tirelessly to address many additional aspects this term to ensure the education, safety and wellbeing of all pupils. They all have additional roles which enable the schools to effectively remain open, support pupil's home learning when necessary and many other additional tasks. I have been overwhelmed by their support and how much they have taken on.

As we look towards the second part of the half term, we will continue to evaluate our current procedures, make changes in line with any new guidance and will of course let parents know of any changes we need to make in advance.

Again, I would like to thank you for your support throughout this half term and also the many kind and positive messages the schools have received. I know how much they have been appreciated by the staff during this time.

Wishing you all a restful and safe half term break,

Kind regards



Ashley Best-White
Executive Headteacher
The Nebula Federation