



Warbstow Primary Academy

Head of School: Mr S Ellis

1st September 2020

Dear Parent/Carers,

Hello and welcome back to Warbstow Primary Academy! I will be sending out a variety of communication regarding your children's return on the 7th September, but as start please read the following so you are able to start to prepare your children.

As a school, and particularly in my role as Headteacher, we are thinking carefully about how the time away from school may have affected pupils, not just academically but socially and emotionally, too.

We are giving a lot of thought to how we address this when we return. School life will be different, and we will have to help our students adjust and process what they have been through.

Here's how we're planning to do it:

1. Take time to reconnect

Returning may feel strange for some children, especially with new social distancing rules to follow. It's important to give them time to reconnect with each other and with school.

We will be exploring a variety of activities like the one below.

This involves creating a team flag made up of smaller flags. Each one should share a value that pupils feel is important. This will remind each team member that they are part of something bigger than themselves and that they belong.

This is an example of a class team flag.

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Warbstow Primary Academy, Warbstow, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 8UP

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The simple act of discussing it will help pupils to reconnect to one another with something familiar to them all.

2. Make time to talk

If a pupil suddenly mentions their sick grandparent or worries, we will make time to talk about it.

All the children will have a different perspective on their time out of school. They know that the situation here has improved enough for schools to open, but they also need to talk through their concerns about going back to school as the situations have changed and can change further.

All children will have different family circumstances so space and time to talk could be vital.

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3. Embed wellbeing

We already have an excellent resource of SCARF, this already supports our Trauma Informed practise and caring nurturing environment at school.

However, extra emphasis on Wellbeing activities will get the focus they deserve. In a busy timetable, that means teachers making time for your children's mental health.

Here are a few of the activities we plan to use as part of our commitment to Well Being:

- Breathing exercises to relax students. It's important to do these regularly so children are familiar with them in times of need.
- Regular brain breaks in between lessons, or during them, as needed. These could be simple stretches or a burst of star jumps.
- Gratitude journals and shared "what went well" moments. Fostering positive emotion helps to rewire our brains away from negative thoughts. This is particularly important at a time when pupils could have been overexposed to the news or dealing with difficult family situations such as bereavement or job losses.
- Teach students to name and label their feelings. As psychologist Suzy Reading states: "People who could label their feelings using rich vocabulary were found to be 40 per cent less verbally and physically aggressive than those who had a tough time working out how they felt."

This chart can then be used in a variety of ways by our teachers to help pupils name their feelings and try to explain, if they feel able, why they think they feel that way.

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- Allowing pupils time to choose independent Healthy Minds activities; reading, mindfulness colouring, relaxing music, drawing and so on. This can be whole-class for a short period of time and be up to individuals to identify when they need it.

4. Give time to adapt

Remembering and slotting into old routines takes time and patience even under normal circumstances; with social-distancing restrictions, it will take even longer.

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This means being patient and giving children more time, understanding they may not be quite at the level they were when we last saw them. We will endeavour to do whatever it takes to help them process everything.

5. Find ways to laugh

Laughter is so important for releasing tension and building a sense of connection. Finding ways to help the children laugh at school is an important focus, one that I am sure you understand is important at home too.

These strategies are not exhaustive, but they are a good start to helping our pupils feel safe, supported, connected and emotionally ready to learn.

If we are constantly teaching our pupils how to look after their wellbeing, we become better at looking after our own as teachers and as parents, too.

What can you do to support your child's return to school?

- Please reassure them that we are aware that they may be feeling anxious and that they may need extra support.
- Read and explain the drop off and pick up routines and the structure of the Bubbles. Letter & Videos on website and Facebook.
- Support them and us be preparing for the back to school activities below.

Activities for Infant class children (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2)

We will be making 'happiness boxes' with younger pupils on their first day back to comfort them.

This is a particularly good thing to do with children who are suffering from separation anxiety, but it can be useful in helping all younger children to self-regulate their emotions.

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1. Parents/careers and staff need to bring in on **Monday 7th September** shoeboxes (or similarly-sized cardboard boxes, no bigger).
2. Each pupil's box will be decorated on their first day back (not at home), they can decorate how they like!
3. They should also fill their happiness box with **anything** (not an electric game or phone please) that will comfort them, like a toy or fabric to stroke, photographs and messages from parents (pupils shouldn't physically share the contents of their boxes with others, to limit the spread of germs).
4. Once they've made their boxes, staff will regularly encourage pupils to spend time with their happiness box.
5. Pupils will be given time with their box if they're anxious or distressed.
6. Teachers will also encourage pupils to go to their box whenever they need to, so they can self-regulate their emotions.

Activities for Junior class children (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6)

1. Letter to my teacher

Children will write a short letter about themselves (at home and bring to school on Monday 7th September). They have a list of headings which they could include below. Things like;

family, hobbies, personality, likes and dislikes, worries, concerns, what they are looking forward to, lock down fun, lockdown learning (add more if you wish).

The **children** need to use this as an opportunity to let teachers know all the things that they would like staff to know about them. These letters will give us a great insight into the minds and lives of the children and I hope you learn lots of little things about them too. Their level of insight and openness I hope amazes you. We will follow up in the weeks ahead with a short chat with each child in which we will thank them for sharing with us and reassure them about any concerns or worries which they outlined.

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The letter will be Confidential and not openly share across the class.

They will be used to instigate conversation around concerns and worries with a classroom worry board and suggestions as to how to reduce anxiety and improve wellbeing through group activities.

Teachers will be using a variety of other activities and strategies to support your children.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Best regards

Stuart Ellis

Head of School

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