



Remembering Yesterday, Learning from Today, Striving for tomorrow

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Head Teacher: Mr Simon English

3rd January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I apologise that I am writing to you at such short notice, given that the start of the new school term is tomorrow. I also apologise that within the Trust we are currently unable to give the certainty of a definitive plan for your child's education this term. However, I think it is important to openly share the current situation within Ironstone Academy Trust, and your child's individual school with you. I will work with your child's head teacher, or Head of School, and send a further letter on Monday to confirm our plans for the rest of the week.

Details of school opening on Monday 4 1 2021

Most importantly, we need to let you know that at Zetland Primary School we will be closed for an emergency PD Day on Monday 4th January. As we have some staff following advice provided by their Unions, this means that we will be using this PD Day to plan the support for those children in the year groups most effected which at the moment includes Nursery, Year 1, Year 3 and Year 4. We will endeavour to keep disruption to these year groups to a minimum and your Head Teacher will inform all parents by letter distributed through Marvellous Me and through the school website of the organisation of year groups by the end of tomorrow.

Why have we made this decision to write to you today, on the last day of the holiday?

On Wednesday 30 December the government announced that primary schools in some Tier 4 areas would be instructed to undertake online learning with their children for the first two weeks of this term. Although a Tier 4 area, Redcar and Cleveland was not mentioned in this list.

On Friday the 1st January, the DfE updated their guidance, following health concerns raised by some local councils, to include more Tier 4 areas. The latest version of the "Contingency Framework" can be viewed on the DFE website.

On Saturday the 2nd January a number of leadership and teacher Unions shared their concerns with both the government and their members, and questioned why primary schools in some Tier 4 areas were being instructed to undertake at least two weeks of remote learning and others were being instructed to start in person learning from Monday 4th January. Once again, their views can be found on their respective websites.

As of Sunday 3rd December my understanding is that guidance has not changed. This morning we wrote to all staff asking as to their intentions. Some Ironstone staff have decided not to attend school in person due to health and safety concerns. This is their legal right as employees. Their decision has been shared with Trustees, and they understand and respect their decision. This has led to a situation where, at some of our schools some classes might be in school learning in person and some classes learning remotely at home. Additionally, like all areas of society we have staff who existing medical conditions who have been advised not to attend. We also have pregnant staff who have been

individually advised not to attend school, and work from home. We also have staff who are required to stay at home due to 'Track and Trace' notifications.

Our Head teachers will liaise daily to review the situation, and update Trustees as the situation or advice given to us develops.

For clarification at this point I would make clear both the DfE and the Unions are only proposing this action initially covers the first two weeks of term. During this time Trustees have asked we will show the same understanding for any families who choose to keep their children home for remote learning during this time period.

The staff and Trustees at Ironstone support the DfE's view that consistency of learning is important for children, and we recognise that the relationships and routines associated with schools support children's wellbeing. Any potential changes to our plans are not linked to unsafe practices at Ironstone, concerns being raised are due to the rise in numbers of positive cases both locally and nationally. The Trust already has more advanced risk mitigation measures than many other schools, with for example staff routinely wearing visors and/or masks in classrooms.

Despite everyone's best efforts there may be periods of remote learning ahead of us during this term. We will do everything we can to safeguard the health of your child and every member of the school community, and to communicate in as clearly and timely a manner as possible.

Yours Sincerely

Carl Faulkner
CEO Ironstone Academy Trust