



Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am so thankful to have our whole school family all back together in school. We have had such a great first week back and classes are all settling beautifully back into school. The sunshine really helps, especially at play and lunch! We have so much to look forward to in the coming months. In two weeks' time, the end of term newsletter will be written by every class so you can see photos and a summary from each class of what they have been up to! Lots of exciting learning has been taking place already and in just the first two days I have seen: daily wake and shake in KS1, beautiful art work, making Mother's day cards, some wonderful writing, maths, Science, exploring History sources, circle time, incredible reading, creative play, active sports and most importantly really happy children and staff learning together!

**Shining Brightly:**

The children are all being their usual beautifully behaved and respectful selves and we are so proud of them all. We have done a few safety reminders with them around not climbing on the walls after school, awareness of the road out front of school and safety around play as they have not been together for some time. The children have really been respectful and reflective and understand that we need to keep each other safe. I am fully aware that the past few months have brought challenges to many and staff are making sure they build in lots of time to talk, work together, supporting the children.

**Justice-** our Christian value in focus for this term is Justice. This week we have looked at 'treating people fairly' and considering the need to consider both sides and that in order to treat people fairly, we may not always be giving people exactly the same as we all start from different points and have different levels of need so some people need more/ less to get to the same point. It has been very interesting. We continue our worship on zoom for the whole school and in classes.

**Heroes and Heroines-** I am hoping to be able to look into ways of bringing this to you again from outdoors in the Summer and if not via zoom- I think we could all do with a 'Heroes and Heroines' boost together again!

**Challenge Partner report-** As I mentioned before, I was absolutely delighted to let you know that our school got the highest 'Leading' grade in all areas in our recent Challenge partner review in February. The report is going live on our school website but I have attached it for your information- I hope you feel proud of our school who continue to 'reach and shine' even during a pandemic!

**Parents Evenings-** The appointments for these will be going live via Mr Hockaday on Monday and will run on Zoom over three evenings Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March. For years 1-6 (further to my email with information about this) you will receive your mid-year reports on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March. We have a very exciting and improved new end of year report format for July which I know you will really love. It is all designed, shared for very positive feedback from a handful of staff, parents and Governors and is ready to go.

**Emotional and mental Health-** As I am sure you are fully aware, wellbeing and emotional and mental health are at the heart of our curriculum and are something I am passionate about. I am currently completing further training to be mental health lead for the school as well as wellbeing lead to support all pupils, staff and myself. We have always provided yoga, Zumba, mindfulness and MISP (massage in schools) for all pupils and staff and we have funded fully 3 fully trained ELSA's in school (Emotional Literacy Support assistants) who have been invaluable over the years and continue to be so. I do not believe wellbeing is a buzz word or a one off thing but that it should be integral to all that you do and learn. In September I am leading one of the



key areas of our school improvement plan in this area to explore some further whole school programmes that I have been researching forward and this will be really excellent and beneficial for all pupils and staff members of AKPS. I am really excited to have made a fabulous connection with Lizzie from 'Beanology' [Home - Beanology](#) and she will be delivering a special mental health workshop for every class on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and I have booked her three times for the end of each long term next year as well. Her workshops will support my school improvement work. School is funding these extra workshops for the children through the school budget as I believe that this is so important for them. Classes R to 2 are focussing on feelings factories, Years 3 and 4 exploring feelings and Years 5 and 6 exploring dealing with emotions through their workshops on 5<sup>th</sup> May and Lizzie will be delivering these in a super fun and engaging way which I know the children will love.

We acknowledge that this is a very difficult time for many families so please remember there is help out there should you need it; you are not alone. Today I was asked to share a really helpful charity called 'Lighthouse' who are supporting one of my families through a financially challenging time.

**Staffing news-** I would like to, on behalf of all of us, wish luck to Mrs O'Neill and her husband who are expecting their first baby at the end of this month. Mrs O'Neill has kept teaching because she has been able to teach from home remotely and her last day is today. We are so excited for them and will let you know as soon as her 'unicorn princess' is born (Mrs O'Neill is having a girl and she is addicted to unicorns!). Mrs Dearsley has made a magnificent start this week so that Mrs O'Neill could get all of her reports and parents evenings done before she left. We officially welcome Mrs Dearsley to Year 5, but we already know her incredibly well as she is a regular supply teacher for us and a super experienced Year 6 teacher too!

**Lunchtimes-** we are still operating in bubbles at play and lunch and this means children have designated zones and therefore require greater staffing to work with the bubbles to ensure bubbles do not mix outdoors or in the dining hall- it really is a military operation and our MDSA team are incredible in putting it in place and supporting the children every day with this. This is particularly challenging for us all and the wet weather does not help as it restricts areas of the field. We have some amazing plans for the outdoor play which we are putting into place ready for when the children can roam freely around the grounds as we used too. Until then we have to put procedures into place for timetables which may feel a little restrictive at times, especially when the field is super muddy or it is wet and in line with our COVID procedures for the dining hall but we are doing our very, very best! Most staff offer to give up part of their much needed lunches to help and provide extra supervision for the bubbles to support our wonderful MDSA team and to supervise and play with the children. Sunshine, dry field and mixing of bubbles will all massively help us! We are also really working hard with classes on play as with time apart, socialising at lunch can be a challenge for some along with gentle play but we are out playing with them to support or observing and guiding. I will let you know of our wonderful plans in place for the Summer term for the outdoor space as soon as I am able to - hopefully by Easter.

### **Catch up- just an overview as this is constantly mentioned in the media so I wanted to share our AK strategy**

When we returned from lockdown in September, I wrote our catch up plan with my team which I have put onto the website and this is a working document for us in school. We worked from September until December ensuring that we continued with our high quality teaching and learning and readjusted our maths and English curriculums to make sure that your children did not miss any key units of learning. The biggest impact seemed to be on stamina with writing due to not being in school for daily practice, phonics and also readiness to progress in terms of routines, particularly among the KS1 children that had been missed in those



key March- July terms. We did not waste a minute and were visited by county to look at our work and they were incredibly pleased with the amount of work we were expecting and the quality of our work from our children but also that we had got the balance right with the wellbeing of our pupils. The temptation was for schools to just focus on reading, writing and maths but we continued our broad and rich curriculum and in my Ofsted inspection on 1<sup>st</sup> December, for 5 and a half hours I was tested on our AK approach and this verified that we had done really well to ensure that our children had returned and quickly gained ground lost during the March to July lockdown. Meanwhile, my team and I were planning our action just in case we were to return to lockdown and to ensure we were trained and ready to be able to deliver a blend of learning including daily live teaching to those at home and in school. This again was worth every single minute as when we again entered lockdown at little notice, we were ready to go and start from day one with our very best provision and we could ensure incredible levels of engagement across the school. We continued to provide thorough feedback to all pupils so that work during this time could continue the best learning possible and support parents at home and therefore not mean we were really behind upon return to school. In February, we went through another review as I wanted further external ratification that we did indeed do well with our September to December provisions and continue this through lockdown and this (as you will see from the challenge partner report was verified).

The catch up strategy we have in place for AKPS which is bespoke to us and built upon our children's needs is to benefit all pupils as it really importantly works with emotional and mental health for all as well as academic support. Really key is the forward planning and making the most of every minute so that we don't have so much to back fill/ such big gaps to fill. Our staff motto in school is 'finger on the pulse'. We know your children really well and we all make sure that we provide our absolute best every day to ensure that each child can flourish so please rest assured that this school is doing really well and thank you for your tremendous support in working in partnership with us to enable this to happen. I can say that the overall areas we will initially be supporting the children with is their stamina to work at their best throughout the day, their social interactions at lunch and play to ensure they are happy and able to problem solve and their stamina for writing.

**Website-** We are currently updating and re-organising our school website. You might find that it does not work properly from time to time as we are updating it but we have worked so hard behind the scenes as a team to get this all streamlined and updated. My thanks to Sarah Smith who then has the unenviable task of getting all our updates and ideas onto the website! We anticipated it being totally finished in the Summer term.

**Breakfast and After school club users-** Thank you so much for supporting our breakfast and after school club and keeping them going. Our attendance at breakfast club is rising now which is a great relief but I hear numbers are low at after school club. I totally understand situations have changed, I just wanted to alert you that we will need to increase numbers to keep the after school club here at school rather than moving to another venue. Always go through Mighty Oaks, Chantelle and Miles about after school club and through our school for breakfast club. Both elements of wrap around care are so important for our school. After school club has its very own classroom base and outdoor area now which is brilliant so they are able to keep bubbles apart for now and also provide a wide range of exciting activities in the new designated building (old class R classroom and outdoor space).

**Thank you-** Thank you so much for your support of your children at home and in response to parent mails. I will be writing fortnightly newsletters from today as I have been sending parent mails during lockdown as they are more personal. I look forward to sharing with you what each class has been up to in the next



newsletter in a fortnight! We are also planning our Global Awareness and Sports weeks in June, we have National Science week next week, life-saving skills annual visit from the Air Ambulance for every class and I am living in hope that we will be able to do our Year 4 forest school camp out in June and our Year 5 and 6 residentials to Viney Hill in July! These are just a few things to look forward to. It is so important to keep looking forward and we have made sure that as a school we have been doing that throughout the pandemic so we continue reaching and doing our very best for our children and families.

It is so lovely to be back! I hope you are all well and settling back into routines now your children are back in school. Thank you for making sure they are in school every day and making the most of the wonderful learning time we have planned for them!

**HUGE THANK YOU FOAKS!**

Huge thank you to our fabulous FOAKS team who have been organising some brilliant new events and opportunities for families of the school. A big thank you to everyone who engaged with the Usbourne book event organised by FOAKS, which has given the school £360 worth of books for classes and library. Thank you so much!!

With my warmest wishes to you all and a huge virtual hug!

*S.L.Saville*

Mrs Saville

Head Teacher

All dates for the year are on the calendar on the school website on [www.akps.org.uk](http://www.akps.org.uk) to help you plan ahead.

Date	Event
Weds 17 <sup>th</sup> March	Class photos-( Covid safe format)
Weds 28 <sup>th</sup> & Thurs 29 <sup>th</sup> March	Air Ambulance visit to School
Weds 5 <sup>th</sup> May	Beanology Mental Health day
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> June	TD Day
Tues 8 <sup>th</sup> -Fri 11 <sup>th</sup> June	Global Advocacy Week
21 <sup>st</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> June	Sports' Week
Fri 16 <sup>th</sup> July	End of year Reports home to Parents and Carers

# ASHTON KEYNES

Church of England VC Primary School

SHINE BRIGHT ★ REACH FOR THE STARS



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