



# AMHERST SCHOOL

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## Message from Mr Reid



**Happy New Year!** I was not expecting to be writing to you in January with the school again closed to only Key Worker/Vulnerable children. I think we all knew it was a possibility with the high transmission rates in Kent before Christmas.

Firstly, well done to all children, parents and staff who have adapted to the new routines whether in school or working remotely.

## GOOGLE CLASSROOM

The introduction of the **twice daily live Zoom** lessons has made a **huge difference**.

Having reflected on our remote learning offer during the first lockdown and considered feedback from our recent parent questionnaire, the two areas we **wanted to improve** was **accountability** and **connectivity**. I am pleased we have achieved both so far. The **engagement level is 99.5% with children** either working remotely online at home or attending school. This is a fantastic achievement, so **well done to you at home and staff**.



Please encourage your child to **upload work completed so teachers can view it and provide feedback**. Please ensure your child's name is correct when on Zoom.

We will continue as before **uploading the week's lessons on Google Classroom from 8.00am on Sunday for the week ahead**. Feedback last time was that this was really useful when you are organising your home schooling week, especially if there are resources that need printing out in advance. I am aware that printing is expensive (I too have three children home schooling) and we will try to minimise where appropriate. Please could we ask that children **don't complete lessons days in advance** as it will make the live zoom lessons less meaningful.



**One of the challenges of home schooling is having enough live content to enable connectivity but not so much that it limits your flexibility at home**. Hopefully you are finding the **prerecorded lessons useful as you can pause** them and watch at a time that suits you.



## KEY WORKERS

**Thank you** to all key worker parents for returning so swiftly your forms at the end of the Christmas holidays. **A key change to our strategy is the deployment of teaching assistants in school to deliver key worker provision**. This has been done to **enable class teachers to complete the two live Zoom lessons each day** and be available to answer **questions/provide support** on Google Classroom throughout the school day.

All schools across Kent and nationally have seen a **huge increase in demand for key worker places compared to the first lockdown in March**. At Amherst we have increased from approx. 8 children in March to 69 this week. We very much mirror the picture across Kent which is **18% of primary aged children are now in school** due to being a key worker or vulnerable. **This sharp increase has an impact on the ability of this period of school closure to be an effective tool in reducing transmission**. It also places greater risk of year group bubbles in school having to close due to a positive case.

Please can I remind you that the government guidance states:

*Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.*

I am aware this is a **really hard balance to get right**. We want to support all key workers by having their children in school to enable their critical work to continue. However, families also all **need to try and stay at home to avoid transmission of the virus**, especially with the new variant. **This system is reliant on trust and goodwill and every family has a different set of circumstances they need to consider**.

## MA BOOKS

Many children have their MA books at school. Please be reassured we will not be setting homework so there is no requirement to have them at home.

I hope you all enjoy a break from home schooling this weekend ready for a full week next week!





# STARS OF THE WEEK

We will resume our stars of the week next week!

As per our previous lockdown, **teachers will select** their class' star of the week. **Parents will be notified** in the beginning of the week and **asked to send in a photo** of their child and two or three sentences telling us something amazing they have done at home.



## MUSIC

**Congratulations to Eleanor H with her fantastic music exam results:**

Grade 4 flute - merit

Grade 3 singing - pass

## KEYWORKER NOTICES

### ARRIVAL at drop off

Please ensure your child arrives **NO LATER than 8.45am** as we need to get everyone set up and ready for their online registration with their teacher at 09.00am.



### PE KIT DAYS — Football

Please ensure your child bring shinpads and football boots in on the following days:

Monday—Year 3

Tuesday—Year 4

Thursday—Year 5

Friday—Year 6



## FIRST NEWS

Please click below to have a read of this week's First News.



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# BIRDWATCH WEEK IS BACK



**SCHOOLS** may be closed but you can still join in with RSPB's Big Schools' Birdwatch this month!

Every year the RSPB asks schools around the country to spend an hour counting and monitoring birds and wildlife. This year's Birdwatch runs from 5 January - 22 February, and is free to join in. Get your teacher to register at [rspb.org.uk](https://rspb.org.uk) to get access to a whole pack of free, downloadable resources which will help you learn about the UK's birds, even if you are learning at home.

Monitoring the wildlife in our local areas is important because it helps conservationists understand how well, or badly, a species is doing. It helps them create a picture of different species found in the UK and where they are living.

If your school can't take part this year, you can join in at home with the Big Garden Birdwatch, which runs from 29-31 January.