



Hillcrest Primary School

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Try

Hillcrest Downham Market

Norfolk

PE38 9ND

Telephone: 01366 388191

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24th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE 2021 UPDATE 9: HILLCREST REPOENS TO ALL ON MONDAY 8th MARCH

A Return for All to the Staggered Start Times from the Autumn Term

Following the recent government announcement, I am pleased to confirm that Hillcrest Primary School will reopen to ALL pupils from Monday 8th March.

For the remaining three weeks of the Spring Term, up until the Easter break, the children will start and finish school at the same staggered times that they had got used to during the Autumn Term.

As it has been some time since all of the children were at school, we have posted the start and finish times for each class below...

Class	Start of Day	End of Day
Suns	8.45am	3.20pm
Asteroids	9.00am	3.35pm
Titan	9.00am	3.35pm
Meteors	9.15am	3.50pm
Tethys	9.00am	3.35pm
Planets	9.15am	3.50pm
Nebulas	8.15am	2.50pm
Mercury	8.30am	3.05pm
Comets	8.45am	3.20pm
Mars	9.30am	4.05pm
Saturn	9.15am	3.50pm
Proteus	9.00am	3.35pm
Jupiter	9.00am	3.35pm
Europa	9.15am	3.50pm
Venus	9.30am	4.05pm
Pluto	8.15am	2.50pm
Neptune	8.30am	3.05pm
Earth	8.45am	3.20pm

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School Closed on Monday 1st March

Hillcrest Primary School will be CLOSED to ALL pupils on Monday 1st March in order to enable a staff training day to go ahead. This will allow staff an opportunity to prepare for the full and safe return of all pupils the following week. Therefore, there will be NO provision of Emergency Childcare for the Key Workers or Vulnerable Children on that day.

Maintaining the Social Distancing

Although the roll out of the vaccine is going well and the case numbers are much reduced from the high levels seen at the start of January, case numbers still remain high and until the prevalence of the coronavirus in the local area has diminished even further, the social distancing restrictions that have been in place at school since September will remain in effect.

It is worth noting that, despite the success of the vaccination programme nationally, none of our pupils will have been vaccinated, very few of our staff members will have received the vaccine and very few of our pupil's immediate family members will have yet received the jab. The measures in place have been successful so far in keeping disruption from Covid-19 at the school to a minimum and now, even more than ever, we need the parents to support us in keeping up those high standards of adherence to the social distancing guidelines.

As we would have explained when we first established the staggered start times in September, it is vitally important that the children are brought to school promptly at the time stated. If people arrive too early, they end up mixing with the families on site for the previous time slot and if people arrive too late, not only are the children missing out on some of their learning, but they are also running the risk of mixing with families arriving for the next time slot. The staggered start times are to help minimise the number of people on site at any one time.

The one-way system that has been in effect since the start of the pandemic will remain in force with the only access to the school via the front car park gates or the Civray gate. The Sandringham Drive access to the school will remain closed.

All adults coming on to the school site or high school aged children picking siblings up, should wear face masks. This has been in effect for all Key Worker families since returning in January and will now apply to all families upon our return on the 8th March.

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No Screen Day – Monday 1st March

In order to facilitate our Staff Training Day on Monday 1st March, rather than providing no remote learning on that day, we will be taking it as an opportunity to hold our second No Screen Day.

Class teachers will be in touch with their pupils to explain what activities they will be asked to choose from on this occasion. The first No Screen Day before half-term was a roaring success with many positive comments coming from home about the experiences that were shared.

Staff Testing

As further reassurance to parents about the safety measures that are being put in place to ensure all within the school remain as protected as possible from the virus, all staff within Hillcrest are being tested twice weekly for Covid. Therefore, we can be as certain as possible that no member of staff on site at any point in time are carrying the virus.

Communication with Staff

We would like to remind parents that, upon our return on 8th March, they should not be approaching staff at the classrooms doors to hold conversations with the teachers for the safety of both the parent and the teacher. All information that the teachers need to know in order to provide the best care for the children they can, should be shared via email direct to the class teacher at least 30 minutes before the time that their class opens its doors. Any emails sent later than that point may not be seen until the end of the day.

After-School Clubs

Although the government are keen, for very good reasons, that outdoor physical activity and children's sports clubs are up and running over the course of the next few weeks, until we no longer require the day to be staggered in the way that it currently is, we will not be running after-school clubs. This will certainly be the position through until Easter and will be reviewed after that point.

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What will life at Hillcrest be like after Easter?

It would appear that there will almost certainly continue to be social distancing measures and other Covid-restrictions in place after the Easter break.

We do still hold out some hope, however, of reducing the amount of staggers that we currently have by opening up the opportunity for whole year groups to start and finish school at the same time.

By treating a whole year group as a 'bubble' this would open up the opportunity for collaborative work to take place between classes and for staff expertise to be shared across more than one class. It would also allow a whole year group to socialise and play with their friends during break and lunch periods.

However, moving towards whole year group 'bubbles' does come with its added risks. If one child or member of staff tested positive, it may be necessary to isolate all of the children within the whole year group rather than just those from one class.

Therefore, IF we do move towards year group 'bubbles' as a next step towards relaxing restrictions in school, it will only be in the event that the virus is circulating in very low levels locally and that data supplied by Public Health England will be carefully assessed before taking that next step.

Specialist Resource Base Update

Cocksedge builders moved in at the start of this week, undertaking work to prepare the ground for the arrival of their temporary offices. The first main job has been to install a gate to the rear of the Hillcrest field, leading out onto Civray Avenue which is where their construction traffic will enter the site from.

Cocksedge are currently constructing a temporary road around the edge of the school field leading to the point where they will need to offload materials close to the site where they are actually building the SRB. Once this is in place, the first main job is to oversee the removal of the final mobile classroom that remains on site.

Hillcrest appointed the first member of staff for the SRB before half-term with the Higher Level Teaching Assistant post resolved. This week, senior leaders have been going through the process of appointing the first teacher to work in the centre.

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Attendance Expectations

The recent government announcement about schools reopening was also backed up with further advice for schools. This further advice insisted that attendance from 8th March is compulsory and that the normal routines for following up non-attendance should be in place.

We agree with the sentiment and firmly believe ourselves that after such a long absence from school, to delay the children's return any further would be detrimental to their education and wellbeing. Therefore, we would urge parents to take the opportunity that the 8th March offers them and send your children back to school.

However, we also understand that there will be some families with far greater anxieties about the current health situation than others and who may still be a little nervous about the prospect of everyone returning in a couple of weeks time.

Therefore, as a school, Hillcrest won't be following up absences during the final three weeks of the Spring Term where, after a conversation with the school, it is obvious that anxieties over Covid are still running high, although we will work with families to try and reassure them of the measures that we are putting in place to keep the children safe.

However, from the start of the Summer Term, we will have the same expectations that all children attend as we would at any other time of the year with the usual routine of fines for persistent absentees once again in place.

Short Notice School Closures

As we have said elsewhere in this update, a large proportion of the Hillcrest community are yet to have their first Covid vaccination. Therefore, the prospect still remains that we may come across positive cases of Covid amongst those we know and are close to.

With this in mind, it may still become possible that partial school closures or whole school closures are still necessary going forwards in the event that a positive case in school requires several members of staff and children having to isolate. Also, in the event that several members of staff are affected by Covid and have to go into self-isolation because of family members, it may become necessary to close parts of the school for short periods.

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Don't Forget to Inform School if Your Child Tests Positive for Covid

Even though most of the Hillcrest pupils are not in school at the moment, we still need to be informed if any of our pupils test positive for Covid during the school closure period.

Therefore, if any Hillcrest pupil, whether they are attending as part of the Emergency Childcare Provision or not, come down with symptoms and then test positive, please let the school know via office@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk or on 01366 388191.

We still have a duty to gauge the spread of the virus amongst our pupil population even though they may not be at school.

DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IF...

- *...they display a temperature of 37.6 degrees or higher;*
- *...they have a persistent cough (regardless of whether you believe this to be caused by something else);*
- *---they complain of a sudden and extreme loss of taste or smell.*

In the event that they are displaying these symptoms, you MUST get your child tested as they will NOT be accepted back into school until a NEGATIVE Covid-19 test has been received and their symptoms have subsided.

If your child develops any of these symptoms whilst at school, we will isolate them and then ask you to come and collect them.

And Finally...

We are nearly there! The end of Google Classrooms and the end of the Key Worker provision is to be replaced by a near-normal school life with the children in their classrooms, where we want them to be.

I know that the staff cannot wait until 8th March comes around and they are genuinely excited about the prospect of supporting the children with their smooth return to the classroom.

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Hillcrest will remain vigilant when it comes to the virus and therefore, the near-normal that I referred to will be what school was like during the Autumn Term with the many and varied Covid-restrictions remaining in place for the time being.

As soon as we can get life back to something like it was before the pandemic started, we will. We will then be able to get back to doing the things that Hillcrest does so well and offering children the full range of opportunities that we have always offered in the past along with some new and exciting ideas that we will be working on with the children.

I hope that all of our families remain safe and well. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Try