

The Lantern

St. Boniface said of St. Bede that 'he shone forth like a lantern.'



Dear Families

Happy New Year!

I do hope the holiday was good and that the term has started well for your children and you. You may know that last week saw the highest daily average of new COVID 19 cases since the first case of the virus was recorded in England. This week, in school, the daily average of pupils absent has been 30, with a third of these children having tested positive. Prior to the pandemic, most days at our school saw between 12 and 14 children absent because of sickness—about one from each class. This will give you some idea of the challenges you and we are facing. Our school, like most, is beginning to struggle to replace classroom staff when a colleague is ill and cannot be with us. We currently have one member of staff who is timetabled for some of the week to stand-in for absent colleagues, but thereafter I am reliant upon school staff agencies to provide me with temporary people in the event of sickness. The agencies are struggling such to find temporary staff. Today, I have two teachers absent, but could not find agency replacements, so had to redeploy people from other duties. If the Government are correct, the staff problems we are facing are likely to get worse before they get better. We are being told to prepare for occasions this term when we may have a quarter of our staff absent at some point. I do not want to be in the position where I have to revert to remote lessons for some groups of children on some days, but I cannot guarantee that I will be able to avoid it. I will, of course, keep you fully informed at all times, to the best of my ability. Should you have any questions for me regarding the school's approach to dealing with the ongoing situation, do not hesitate to email me—gary.nott@redbridge.gov.uk

Tutoring

There will be no after school tutoring because Mrs Roberts and I will be meeting each evening with a different year group team of teachers to discuss the progress of the children. Tutoring will recommence in some year groups in the week beginning Monday 17th January. Should your child be invited, you will receive an invitation next week.

Summer Assessments

As I write, the Government is very clear that this summer's statutory assessments for primary and secondary pupils will go ahead. I am not altogether sure how I feel about this. I have a significant minority of children whose attendance currently registers at below 90%. This means they have missed more than 1 school day in 10 so far this year — which may, despite everyone's best efforts, have dampened their progress. We will have to wait and see if the Government adopts a different stance in coming weeks.

Assemblies

This half-term, we are not bringing different year groups together for assemblies in person, but will instead use Google Classroom to bring the children and staff together for these special times.

Visitors

I am trying to ensure this half-term that only essential visitors to the school join us. I will review this over the half-term holiday.

Mrs Roberts and I hope your weekend is a good one. May those of you that are well, stay so; and, let's hope for a speedy recovery for all those in our school community who are ill.

God Bless

Gary