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Friday 13th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

This has understandably been a very anxious week for a lot of parents, particularly with the ongoing situation around the COVID-19 coronavirus. Over the course of the week I have spoken to many parents about the situation and earlier today, I sent out a letter to all parents via ParentMail. I have also created a page on the school website that you can access for all the latest information that we, as a school, have – this can be found [here](#) and also includes a copy of the letter that was sent out.



Please be assured that we continually monitor the situation as well as the guidance from Central Government, Local Authority and Public Health England.

Brian Starling

Following on from the sad news of Brian's passing, I have some information about the funeral arrangements which I have been asked to share with the school community.

Brian's funeral will take place on Friday 27th March at 2pm. Brian was well-loved and respected and, as I am sure you can appreciate, there are a great many members of staff who wish to go and pay their respects.

Whilst the school will remain open for children during the afternoon of the 27th, children will be 'supervised' rather than 'taught'. If parents are able to make arrangements for children to be collected at 1pm, it would be very much appreciated as we will be running on a 'skeleton staff' but we will, of course, look after any children who cannot be collected.

Should parents wish to pay their respects, I am told that the funeral procession will pass through Bridge Village on the way to the crematorium and I think it would bring some small comfort to the family to see people lining the route through the High Street.

Secondary Admissions: National Offer Day (Current Year 6)

A reminder that parents of Year 6 children need to return your acceptance forms by **Monday 16th March**. I would recommend that this is done even if you wish to appeal the school placement. As always we are here for advice and guidance and all key dates can be found on our school website page, [Transition into Secondary School](#).

Parent Council

On Tuesday 31st March, I will be meeting with our Parent Council at 7.30pm. If you have any questions or comments that you would like raised then please do speak to your Parent Council representative.



Staffing News

On Tuesday we interviewed three candidates for the Teaching Assistant position left vacant by Mrs Hughes and I'm pleased to inform you all that we have appointed Helen Sopp who will be joining our Bridge staff team. Mrs Sopp has a wealth of experience in primary education, most recently at Wincheap School where she spend seven years working in Key Stage 2.

We also have good news in that one of our Bridge staff families is getting a little bit larger! Chelsea Huggett has let us know that she is pregnant with her third child and will be going on maternity leave from the beginning of the next academic year. We have appointed Faith Harvey who will be joining our Teaching Assistant team, initially working mornings after Easter to support children with additional needs in Year 1 and 2 but then full-time from September to cover Chelsea's maternity leave.

Some sad news now. In a couple of weeks' time, we will be saying farewell to Charley Harrington. She has worked at the Bridge Bees Club for over a year and a half now as well as in our holiday provision and we're very sorry to see her go. In a few months' time, she will be starting her teacher training so we may not have seen the last of her! I am sure that you all join me in wishing her the very best in her career.

Parental Consultations

These take place for Year 1 to 3 next week and your child should have brought home their school books for you to look at over the weekend. Please feel free to comment on the slips that also came home and return the books on Monday ready for more learning!

Sadie Bristow Foundation

I've been asked to publicise the upcoming tennis-a-thon at Bridge Tennis Club which will take place between 5am and 11pm on Sunday 29th March 2020. It will be a fun day with a tournament for children and various activities along with a BBQ, raffle and tea and cake sale.

The Sadie Bristow Foundation also recently won a Kent LTA Award for 'Competition of the Year' for their Sadie Bristow Competition which culminated at the Queen's Club last summer.

The Foundation's School Tennis Programme has been a huge success this year and we're really pleased to continue to partner with the Foundation in the coming years.



September and Mixing-Up Classes

Following on from my last newsletter, I've received a number of comments and questions about the proposal to mix-up classes as the children enter Year 2 and Year 5. I'd like to thank all those parents who have asked questions and expressed their opinions either via email, on the phone or on the playground – I have discussed all of these with the senior leadership team and with the Chair of Governors.

This is a very nuanced issue and the conversations I have had with parents have been around the impact such a move would have on children's learning, resilience, social skills, friendship groups and emotional wellbeing. These have been very interesting discussions and, ultimately, we all want the same thing – what is best for the children.

Whilst there have been parents who have contacted me to say that they think it's a great idea, I think it would be fair to say that most of the comments I have received have been *'we like the idea in principle but feel it's too late for the current Year 4'*. I do have a great deal of sympathy with this viewpoint. The children have been together for five years now and, throughout this time, they have always expected to remain together as a group.

Whilst this does not change the potential benefits of mixing-up the classes, I would be remiss by not listening to the concerns of parents and considering the emotional impact on the children in the current Year 4 class.

Schools have a responsibility to act *'in loco parentis'*, this means 'in the place of a parent'. However, I prefer to think of parent and school working **together** for the best interests of the children and this can only happen through listening to each other and considering what each other is saying.

Having listened to the views of a number of parents, I propose the following:

- The Year 1 children will be mixed as they go into Year 2. Safeguards will be put in place to ensure an even mix of abilities, needs, genders and social groups;
- When the Year 1 children reach the end of Year 4, they will be mixed once again as this will be the 'new normal';
- The current Year 4 children **will not** be mixed going into Year 5; this recognises the fact that they would have been together for five years and the potential emotional impact on the children;
- The same would apply to the current Year 2 and 3 children – the plan would be that they will not mix at the end of Year 4 as they too would have been together for five years by this point;
- However, in recognition of some parents' concerns who wanted the mix, I will be speaking to the teachers about greater work between the classes to encourage children working together across the year group (for example on specific projects).

Whilst it would be impossible to address everyone's concerns, I hope that the above proposal does allay the vast majority of them. I still welcome comments and questions over the coming week but I do seek to make a final decision at the end of the week.

With best wishes



James Tibbles

Don't forget that this newsletter and all previous newsletters can also be found on the [Headteacher Newsletter](#) section of our school website.

Upcoming Events

[CALENDAR >](#)

All dates and events can be found on our new school calendar.

You are also able to 'subscribe' to the calendar (there is a link underneath the calendar) which means that you can have the school calendar on your phone or tablet and any updates will automatically appear on your device!

Monday 16th March	<i>Year 1, 2 and 3 Parental Consultations this week</i>		
Tuesday 17th March			
Wednesday 18th March	Marvellous Maths Parent Workshop (Year 4)		
Thursday 19th March	Eco-Council Village Litter Pick	1.30pm: Relax Kids Parent Workshop	
Friday 20th March			
Monday 23rd March	<i>Book Fayre in all week</i>	Girls' Football Match vs Aylesham	
Tuesday 24th March	Year 6 Bioblitz Day		
Wednesday 25th March	4ST Trip to Wildwood	PJ & Loveheart Evening	
Thursday 26th March	Kent School Games Gymnastic Competition	Year 6 School of Rock Auditions	Marvellous Maths Parent Workshop (Year 2)
Friday 27th March			
Monday 30th March	4JH Trip to Wildwood	School Nursing Service in for Year 6	
Tuesday 31st March	Inclusive Sports Event		
Wednesday 1st April	Last day of term		
Thursday 2nd April	-----		
Friday 3rd April	-----		
Monday 13th April	-----		
Tuesday 14th April	-----		
Wednesday 15th April	-----		
Thursday 16th April	<i>First day of Term 5 Primary School Offer Day</i>	Easter Church Services 1pm (KS1) & 2pm (KS2)	
Friday 17th April	Year R Trip to East Kent Railway		