



'Learning together, loving others, guided by God'

Heene Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Mrs Julia Sherlock and Miss Joy Waelend

Dear Parents and Carers,

6th December 2021

Firstly, I want to offer my huge thanks to the Friends of Heene Primary School, for all of their hard work and effort to put together a different, 'deconstructed' Christmas Fair last Friday; it was a great success! We are so grateful to all the parents and friends of the school who took part in the event, in spite of a Fire Alarm in the middle of the afternoon, parents having to self-isolate and the weather not helping. The grotto was magnificent and seeing Santa on the park following the Fire Alarm rules was something I will not forget in a long time – thank you all. We will let you know how much money was raised as soon as we are able.

Last week was an exceptionally busy one in terms of managing the changing Covid-19 advice, staffing levels, some unsettled children and the start of Christmas at Heene, with a focus on Advent. Thank you so much for your wonderful responses to the thoughtful manner in which you have responded to the potential change of arrangements which we will need to make to this year's Nativity celebrations – we are so grateful to you all. During the week we also became aware of the need to communicate better with you as parents and carers about some of the staffing changes and arrangements which we have had to make and the reasons for this. I want to apologise to you for these changes that at times have had to be made at short notice, meaning we have been unable to share these with you as quickly as we should. I will aim to communicate some of these changes to you now.

As a school, we completely rely on having one teacher in each classroom, fit and healthy ready to teach our children on a daily basis. If any teacher is unwell and unable to come to school and teach their children, we have to call the local teaching agency to see if they have a 'supply teacher' to teach the class instead of the regular class teacher. Where this happens, we try to ensure the same group of supply teachers are used so that the children become familiar with the cover teacher and the cover teacher gets used to the school, our routines and of course the children. Over the past few weeks and due to a variety of reasons we have, at times, been unable to recruit supply teachers to cover absent teachers. This leaves us in a very challenging position indeed and with a significant problem to solve, with 30 children without a teacher for the day. We have had to be very creative on three occasions recently where this has happened.

On one occasion two weeks ago, one of our teachers became unwell at the start of the day and had to be taken home. There was no supply teacher from the agency available to teach the class. Here, the partner teacher took both classes themselves with the support from a couple of TAs and by opening the dividing doors between the two classes. This is not ideal, but was successful because the teacher made it so; there was no other solution to that situation.



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The week before last we had two occasions where we had to for half a day, divide the class up into pairs and threes and send them to other classes around the school again because there was no teacher to teach the class. One teacher again became unwell during the late morning and there was no teacher available to cover the class – splitting the class was how we covered the children for the afternoon. This happened on a second occasion on Friday where staff were unwell and there were no teachers available to cover the class. On this occasion, one of our teachers on her day off, came into school to teach in the morning and then the class had to be split in the afternoon. Again, not ideal but we had to find a solution to a pressing problem.

This is not a unique situation for Heene. Schools across the town and the country are facing the very same staffing challenges and we have to manage these in the very best way possible. With the new covid challenges, splitting the classes is very unlikely to be a workable, safe solution to the staffing situation so we will continue to do the very best that we can in the challenging times we are going through.

Some parents have suggested that they should be informed when a different teacher is taking the classes. In January, we are going to find a way of telling parents in the newsletter of any replacement teachers which will be in school for the coming week, in the same way that we share the learning for the week ahead. What will be more challenging will be being able to inform parents 'on the day' of a staff absence. This is because, depending on the situation, we may not know who will be teaching the class, before the start of the school day. However, we will continue to look at this and see if we can improve our communication with you on this.

Staffing Update: Many of you will now be aware that Mrs Cannon (Stanton Class Teacher and Maths Leader) will be leaving us at Christmas to pursue an exciting role outside of education. We are currently seeking to appoint a member of staff to replace Mrs Cannon. This is not going to be at all easy, particularly as Mrs Cannon has given the past 15 years of her professional life to Heene. We are so grateful to her for the real difference she has made to so many children at Heene over the past years. We want to wish every happiness to Mrs Cannon as she takes her leave from us in a couple of weeks time. We thank you so much Mrs Cannon.

Mr Parsons and Miss Atkinson continue to be unwell and Mr McGregor and Miss Beer continue to teach the two year 5 classes and we thank them for their willingness to move from their normal roles to do this for the children in Year 5.

CHANGE OF INSET DAY FOR SPRING 2022:

Just to let you know that our Inset Day, planned for Monday 25th April 2022, has been moved to Friday 29th April 2022 instead. This will be just before the long May bank holiday. I am sorry that we have had to make this change, but we have had to do so because the trainers for our new Phonics Programme, were unable to accommodate 25th April and could only offer 29th. I apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

And so to our learning for the week ahead.....

Reception Classes

In Gruffalo and Elmer classes the children will continue the **topic** 'Marvellous Me'. In English, they will be reading 'The Jolly Christmas Postman' by Allan Ahlberg. We will be looking at the letters that have been written to the different characters in the story and finding out which characters we already know. The children will then be writing a letter to Father Christmas that includes things they want for Christmas this year. In Gruffalo Class we now have a Christmas Post Office role play for the children to send their letters and parcels.

In **Phonics** the children will be consolidating their learning by revisiting the letters – h, sh, r, j. They will be learning to build, read and spell simple vc/cvc words that contain the letters taught so far. Keep a look out for their Phonics Home Learning book which will come home on Thursday (Elmer) and Friday (Gruffalo) for them to practise these letters. Please make sure this book comes back to school every **Monday** so we can stick the next set of letters in.

In **Math's** we will be comparing mass and capacity. They will be holding different items to estimate which feels heaviest, then use the balance scales to check. We will be encouraging the children to notice whether bigger items are always heavier and smaller items are lighter? They will explore capacity using different materials such as water, sand, rice and beads. We will use different sized and shaped containers to investigate full and empty.

In **Music** the children will be practicing their songs for the Nativity performance. They have been creating actions to go with the song lyrics and have done a really good job at remembering the songs so far. We are sure you will see lots of performances of this at home, so prepare your ears!

Year 1

In **English** we will start to draft a poem about our special person.

In **Phonics** we continue to revise sounds we have learnt before but with a focus on handwriting. We will also practise using the sounds to write words and sentences.

In **Maths** we are going to be learning about place value of numbers to 20 (and beyond for some) e.g. 15 has 1 ten and 5 ones. We will also be finding one more and one less and comparing numbers and amounts using the language of 'greater than', 'less than' and 'equal to'.

In **RE** we will be thinking about how the Innkeeper might tell the story of Jesus' birth. The children will then write about how they would have felt if they had been there.

In **RSHE** we will be learning about the people who keep us safe and what they do.

In **Science** we will be learning about the things that people do and celebrate in winter.

In **Design and Technology** we continue making our Christmas card with a moving part.

In **Geography** the children will be making a map of the school including Victoria Park and Norfolk Street.

Please can you continue to help your child learn their lines for the Nativity play if they have any. They were sent home last week. Many thanks.

Year 2

English: We will be consolidating our Here We Are topic learning. We will plan, draft and publish a leaflet to celebrate all we have learnt this term. Our leaflet will include elements of English, History and Geography.

Maths: We will begin to learn about multiplication and division. We will start by sharing into equal groups, adding equal groups and making arrays.

Design and Technology: We will be continuing to practice threading a needle, sewing and stuffing our Christmas decorations.

Music and Drama: We will be continuing to rehearse our Nativity.

RE: We will be exploring the nativity story.

Year 3

Maths: Maths: We will be focussing on 4's. We will group in fours, count in fours, multiply by 4 and divide by 4. We have some fun games to help us with this too.

English: We will be completing our non-chronological reports on the Stone Age. We will be publishing them and hope to share them with Year 2 the following week to teach them ready for next year!

Science: We will be investigating forces using a force meter. We will learn about Sir Isaac Newton and planning an investigation to use a force meter.

History: As a teaser for next year's topic, we look at what is happening in Ancient Egypt during the Stone Age times.

RE: We will be reading stories from the Bible and finding out how The Holy Trinity is represented in them.

Art: We will be creating our own piece of abstract art, taking inspiration from famous artists: Pollock, Miro and Riley.

Year 4

In **English**, we will be continuing to learn all about Boudicca and why she left such an important legacy in preparation for our chronological reports.

In **Maths**, we are going to be developing our problem solving and reasoning skills. We will be looking at questions where the answer isn't always straight forward and there may be more than one thing we need to do to get to the correct answer. We will also be practising how we EXPLAIN our mathematical thinking. This means we don't just write an answer, we explain all the steps we went through to get to that answer.

In **Science**, we will continue observing our eggs we have put in a variety of liquids to study the effect these liquids can have on our teeth. It would really help if you could have a conversation at home about how we look after our teeth and what drinks we need to drink in moderation so that we can keep our teeth healthy.

In **RE**, we will be learning about how Christians show their belief at this exciting time of year. Maybe you could have a chat at home about what Christmas means to you as a family and how you plan to celebrate it!

Our next **DT** project will involve the children making their own purses. If you have any sewing materials at home, it would be great if the children could practise the main stitch we will be using which is the blanket stitch. There's lots of helpful videos online which model this!

Year 5

In English over the next two weeks, we will be writing a Christmas story for a younger reader. This week, we will be looking at a range of different children's Christmas stories and identifying what the main 'ingredients' of these types of text are. We will be creating our own characters and settings and deciding upon a key message that we want our story to give. We will then plan our stories ready to draft next week.

Maths: Next week we will be looking at how to find and calculate the area of different shapes.

Art/History: We have started to look at the Bayeux tapestry and discovered how it was created and what it depicts. Next week we will be continuing to create our own version of this tapestry by working in groups to create a section each.

Geography: We will be discussing the question "How could we better look after our planet?"

Science: We will be continuing our work on gravity and looking at whether the size of objects affects this.

Year 6

Over the next week we will be looking at the following:

English: Practise SATs reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation papers. We will be continuing to write our stories alongside this.

Maths: Practise SATs arithmetic and reasoning papers.

RE: We are hoping Clive will join us to lead some of our learning on incarnation and answer any questions that we may have during the season of advent.

Geography: We will be making an informed decision about whether we would rather live in a region in Canada or West Sussex (UK) and designing a 'tourist leaflet' to attract others to our chosen location.

Science: We will be writing our own biographies based on the research we have carried out on famous scientists.

Many thanks for your continued support.

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