



“Enriching generations to serve and flourish.”

Ditton CE Junior School Newsletter – 29th January 2021

With national losses to the pandemic passing 100 000 this week it is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that we all remain in this fight together. I think the **support** you have given us, the work of the team and your own challenges to work, support your families and carry out home schooling have been **outstanding**. It seems that we may be in this phase for at least a couple of weeks after half term now, so we continue to improve both our offer and help those children who need support accessing learning from home. Many of us are parents too and we are always mindful of the pressures. School staff are now able to **test** themselves twice a week with lateral flow tests Wednesdays and Sundays so that adds to our safety measures. The school’s new **governing board** has quickly stepped up to challenge and support the team, with dynamism and expertise, and on February 9th we meet with the LA to review their decision in the autumn to judge the school a cause for concern. We are confident we will be able to share from that regarding our progress and I will let you know the outcomes.



This week saw **Holocaust Memorial Day** and while it isn’t our top concern right now, there are lessons to be learned from history. I took a trip to Berlin a couple of years ago and remember being shocked to see photos of the way the Nazis persecuted and executed others, singling people out for their differences, their religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political beliefs or disabilities. We’ve started talking to the children about the school being part of a web of support that is there to help them live a full life. Above all else this means doing our best not to prevent others having good lives.

Part of that message is for us, as a school, to be in tune with **children’s well-being and resilience**. Next week is **Children’s Mental Health week** and teachers will plan activities to support that. The theme is **EXPRESS YOURSELF** and Friday will be a **dress to express** day. Even if you are at home you can post pictures. I will be hunting out a few items to try on! I’ve tried each week to offer links which might be of interest to the children learning at home to help you. The RSPB are challenging children to take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch [Big Garden Birdwatch | Join the fun - The RSPB](#) The woodland trust have put together a list of lockdown nature activities [Activities for kids at home or self-isolating - Woodland Trust](#) and here are some forest school at home activities [Bringing Forest School Home - The Outdoors Group](#)

What’s really exciting about the last one is that right now we are training teachers to be ready to deliver **Forest School sessions** on site in the summer and next year as a part of the curriculum. The children are going to love this but your washing machines might not. Just saying! We will write to you about this soon.

If you are experiencing difficulties during these extreme times there are local organisations who might be able to help, https://aylesford-church.org.uk/Groups/353628/Food_Bank.aspx and <https://larkfieldcommunitychurch.co.uk/sidebar/food-bank-at-larkfield-community-church/>



Richard Sutton-Smith