



LANCHESTER E.P. (Cont.) PRIMARY SCHOOL



Weekly Bulletin 1: Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

What a difference a week makes... this time last week I am sure we were all enjoying a pleasant and positive Bank Holiday New Year's Day, looking forward to a better 2021 and then Sunday and Monday happened! It is imperative that we try to keep positive though – we are in a different position to the last lockdown, we now have a vaccine and there is hope – just around the corner... We need to keep reminding ourselves of this so that we manage to get through the next few challenging weeks.

I have already had a number of conversations with parents who are finding it hard. It will be and you can only do what you can manage. We completely understand that many of you are trying to juggle three full time jobs – your own job working from home, educating your child and being a parent. It is impossible. We know you are all trying your best but please do not feel guilty. Just do what you can – you are doing an amazing job!

As always, the most important thing is the emotional well-being of your child. We already have been given additional funding for catch-up interventions for any children who need an additional boost following the last lockdown and I have no doubt that there will be even more funding after this lockdown. So if your child needs to 'catch up' on their return, there will be interventions and additional teaching support so do not worry – just do your best, be there for your child and try your best to be as positive as possible – they need you now more than ever!

Thank You

Your support for us all this week has been immense – thank you. I apologise if I have not replied to your email of support – I have had quite a few emails to deal with this week so have not always had the opportunity to respond and have had to prioritise my time. Likewise, it is always good to receive constructive feedback from parents as well. However, as already said, you all have differing needs, wants and wishes so it is impossible to meet all your requests. But please do not hesitate to email if you have a suggestion or idea which you think could improve what we offer for remote learning!

I would also like to thank you for your support around the media reports earlier this week. This year, I feel as though the general public will be fed up of hearing my voice! BBC Radio Newcastle do tend to approach me for my opinions regarding educational issues at the moment. It is following these interviews that the press and local television then get in touch. I am not political but I am prepared to give an opinion. However, it is important to reiterate that whatever I say or do, is always with the very best interests of your children at the forefront of my mind.

I would also like to thank you for the overwhelming support we have had from parents writing to Ofsted recently, following Gavin Williamson's suggestion that parents complain to Ofsted if they are not happy with the home learning provision. Since that announcement, I am aware that we have a number of parents who have written to Ofsted, complimenting our school, the home learning provision and the care of their children. Again – thank you so much for your supportive and truly inspiring emails. If you would also like to take the time to complete the Ofsted Parent View that would also be useful. This can be found at: parentview.ofsted.gov.uk

Zoom Lessons

These are the key part of the school day for all children learning from home. In these Zoom calls, they are being 'taught' by their teacher. This input from the teaching staff, introduces all the teaching content for the child to then complete their independent work. Please do not let your child complete the independent work before the Zoom lesson as they have not yet had this key input and information.

We are learning all the time and this week has, yet again, been a steep learning curve for us all. Now we all know that this is life for the next 5 weeks, I do think it will help our children to have a structure to their day. It is also important that the children realise that these Zoom calls are 'lessons' and they should behave & dress accordingly. We would like to encourage them to sit appropriately, be dressed, only write on the chat when they are asked to write comments or answers and from next week, all teachers will ask children to stay on the call at the end if they have a specific question about the work or if they don't understand something and would like it clarified.

Recording of Zoom Lessons

We have received a number of requests to record the Zoom lessons so that they can be accessed later on in the day for any parents who are juggling their own work and may have meetings at the same time. Whilst we do save them, we have struggled to upload them to eSchools as the files are too large. We are working on this and hope to have a solution early next week!

Work Packs

It is really important that, if you have hard copies of work packs, this work is kept safely and returned to school. We suggest that parents return them to school to be marked, when collecting the next work pack. We do need to monitor the children's work and if there are any issues, then your child's class teacher will get back to you. The returned work packs will be kept in isolation over the weekend and so will not be marked until the following week.

Timetables

Each year group will be producing a suggested timetable for the school day. This will include times for Zoom calls, completing independent work, reading time, breaks & lunch, twitter challenge, mindfulness/emotional wellbeing activities, helping out at home, Worship/Assembly, CBBC education channel programmes and a physical activity. Obviously these will be just suggestions, but we know from the previous lockdown that many parents appreciated this and helped them to structure the day for their children.

Worship/Assembly

I do apologise to all those families who could not get on the Zoom Worship on Wednesday afternoon. We did not realise that we had a limit of 100 members to each meeting! We are currently sorting out this issue and a normal service should resume again next week! The links for this will have to be changed and will be updated on the class pages and emailed out to parents on Monday. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces on that screen!

Twitter Challenges

It is great to see so many children and families taking part in these. I will post a variety of challenges every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. 'PE with Joe' (Wicks) will be available again three times a week and Mr Graham will post his P.E. challenges on the other two days (Tuesday and Thursday.) It is good to have our very own, home-bred Joe Wicks on the staff!

Food Parcels for Children Eligible for Free School Meals

For those children who are eligible for free school meals and who are not in school, we are providing food parcels. Parents have been contacted this week and they are ready to collect for anyone who responded to the text. All families who are eligible will be sent a text on a Monday and the office must be informed by the Wednesday so that they can be ordered for collection on a Friday. If you have any questions, please just email the school office.

Year 6 Statutory Tests

I am sure that many of our Year 6 parents will have listened with interest to Gavin Williamson's announcement on Wednesday about the cancellation of the Year 6 statutory tests in 2021. This has to be the right decision bearing in mind the circumstances. I am sure some of the children will be disappointed as they know this week is so special for lots of reasons other than the tests – such as the special breakfasts and their lunch at Deanos! Please be reassured, like last year, that our Year 6 children will not miss out and that they will enjoy as many of the usual special treats as possible!

Key Worker and Vulnerable Children Places

Thank you so much for your understanding regarding the places in school. I know many of you will have read the government guidelines around how these places can be allocated. It is essential that we offer our vulnerable children, as well as key worker children, places in school and this has taken some time planning and organise. We have certain health and safety guidelines we have to adhere to meaning that we are now full in some year groups and have a small number of places in other year groups. However, we are still waiting for further guidance from the Department for Education around our updated risk assessment and maximum numbers we can accommodate. If this does change, then we will be back in touch and may be able to offer more places. Just bear with us please – we are doing everything we can as quickly as we can.

We will always try to help and support you whenever we can. If your circumstances change and you believe you might be eligible for a place, feel free to email me but please bear in mind that we already have over 4 times as many children in school as in the summer and we still have more children joining us next week. We now know that schools are vectors for transmission of the new Covie-19 variant, so I must reiterate that the safest place for your child to be at the moment is at home. This protects your child, your family and our whole school community.

Increased data allowances on mobile devices

There is a scheme that has been introduced by the government which temporarily increases data allowances for mobile phone users on certain networks. This is to enable children to access remote education and is for any family who:

- Do not have fixed broadband at home
- Cannot afford additional data for their devices
- Are experiencing disruption to their face-to-face education

If your data is with one of the following networks, you might be able to benefit from the scheme:

- Three
- Smarty
- Virgin Mobile
- EE
- Tesco Mobile
- Sky Mobile
- O2

Other providers may join the scheme at a later stage.

We are able to request mobile data increases for parents – if you think you could benefit from this, please email the school office and they will be in touch for further information from you.

4G Wireless Routers

The Department for Education (DfE) is providing 4G wireless routers for disadvantaged children to help them get online and access remote education. If you have no access to wifi and think you may qualify for this, please get in touch with the school office and we will liaise with you to find out if you could be eligible.

