



South Gosforth First School

'Roots to grow and wings to fly'

Dear Parents & Carers,

Believe it or not, another fortnight has passed since my last update – this is another fortnight closer to having all of our children back in school, which is what I know our whole school community want so desperately.

I know that many of our families are under a lot of pressure and that the 8th March (the date that the government are aiming to have children back in school) may feel really far away right now. However, there are a few messages that I would like to pass on to everyone who is working from home:

★ We know that you may not be able to teach your child/ren as much as you would like to. This is okay. If you need to step away from school work every now and then, please do so. We understand.

★ It's okay to not feel okay. This situation is tough for all of us and it is quite normal for us all to feel a bit sad. We are all missing normality and seeing friends and family when we would like to. But, if these 'not okay' feelings start to take over every day, please contact us. Our staff are here to listen and to help.

★ As soon as it is safe to do so, we will be together as the SGFS family once again. We will then work hard to make sure that children get the support they need to achieve all that they are capable of. Try not to worry too much about gaps. We will address them as soon as we are able to.

Hang on in there just that little bit longer! We will get through this together, because that's what the SGFS school family do.

A few key messages to share with you all today...

Remote Learning Offer & Feedback

Thank you to all of the parents and carers who have commended us on our remote learning offer through positive comments and feedback. Your kind words of support really do mean a lot to us and they do motivate our staff, who are working so incredibly hard to ensure that they plan and deliver high quality, progressive lessons both in school and through home learning videos. I really am so very proud of what our staff have delivered and I believe that their sheer hard work and commitment is testament to what a strong offer we are able to provide for our children both at home and at school. We are planning to make a few exciting adaptations and refinements to things over the next week or so which we believe will really strengthen home learning provision for our families, whilst also supporting our staff and their work-life balance. We will also be sharing new expectations around feedback and the times when our teachers and support staff will be making comments on pupils' work – this is to avoid staff staying up until the early hours responding to uploaded work. More information will follow on this next week.

Numbers of Pupils in School

Last week, the DfE reported that there are 20% of primary aged children attending school nationally. However, at SGFS, we are now up to 42%. A few weeks back, I asked families to really carefully consider whether their children really needed to be in school. The guidance is quite clear now in stating that children of critical workers should be at home if any parents are working from home. I appreciate that some of you are working from home but cannot safely supervise your children because the nature of your work is highly confidential (eg attending virtual live court hearings or child protection conferences) and therefore you cannot safely look after your children. However, if you are able to work from home while keeping your children safe, then I would like to reiterate that you really should have your children at home with you. We know that working with children at home is very challenging but unfortunately this is not sufficient reason to request a school place. As well as the numbers already being high, we are still receiving

requests for places from families where both parents and carers work for the NHS, or have been assigned to deliver the vaccination programme as well as many other genuine cases where parents have got to go out to work in critical roles in the community. We simply cannot turn these families away and so we need to create some additional capacity in school if at all possible. If your child is currently attending and you can look after them safely at home, please let us know immediately so that we can adjust our plans. It might be that your children are currently in full time and you can reduce this to part time - this too would help us enormously and is so important for our whole community. Thank you all in advance for your co-operation.

School Uniform

I thought that it was important to mention to all of our families now that from September, there will be a slight change to our school uniform. Please don't worry everyone – we will still have our beautiful, striking red sweatshirts and in essence, most things will remain the same. However, we will be making a slight change to the owl emblem which is embroidered on to the jumpers and polo shirts. The current owl design which is on our uniform was created many, many years ago by children who attended school at the time. As lovely and characterful as this owl is, we feel that this doesn't reflect our current branding any more, so we will be putting our stylish new owl (as seen in this letterhead) on the sweatshirts and t shirts in preparation for September 2021. I thought that it was useful to mention this to all of our families now in case anyone was thinking of buying any uniform in bulk for when we return to school after this lockdown – I would recommend holding off from doing this and perhaps waiting until close to September when our new design will be introduced.

Lateral Flow Device Testing

This week, the majority of our staff in school have started to take part in twice weekly lateral flow testing for COVID-19. I believe that this is a really positive step from the government as it enables us to clearly identify any staff members who are asymptomatic but may in fact have COVID-19 which is therefore transmissible to other members of our school community and to our pupils. I hope that this really will help to keep our school family as safe as possible.

Thanks to our staff, who have all been following government guidelines really carefully, we have not yet had a positive test result. However, if any staff do test positive from their LFD test (which is then confirmed by a PCR test), this does mean that they would need to self-isolate for the specified period of 10 days (or 10 days from when their symptoms start if they ever get them), alongside any other staff or pupils who were in their class bubble. Whilst I hope that this never happens, I felt that it was important to inform all of our families about this so that everyone is fully informed in the event that we do receive a positive result.

'Windows of Hope'

A number of schools across the city are taking part in a lovely initiative called 'Windows of Hope'. The idea is that families will put up some colourful pieces of art in the windows of their houses which will share a message of hope and joy for Spring. We would love for some of our families to take part. If any of you do decide to take part, please don't forget to post your beautiful windows on Twitter and Facebook, making sure to use the hashtag #windowsofhope and tag in our school - @SouthGosforthFS



A Celebration of Learning

Even though we are still in lockdown, it has been wonderful to see all of the brilliant learning that our children have been doing both at home and at school. In Reception, the children have enjoyed rescuing frozen characters from the ice which has been great fun! In Year 1, the children have been working hard to learn their spellings, using skittles to take away in Maths and learning lots of fun facts about penguins (which the children think are really cute!) Year 2 have been learning about all things birds and working hard on observational art and even doing some bird watching in the garden! Year 3 have been reading the text 'Varjak Paw' which is a real page turner and is full of drama and suspense... And last but not least, Year 4 have completed some fabulous Victorian newspapers. I am so proud of all of our children for still continuing with their fabulous learning, even through these challenging times – keep it up everyone!



Varjak Paw Thursday 28th January



These are some of the birds that you might see. You can use the tally to help you count. You'll find lots of tips on identifying birds as well as their calls at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch. The RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 201916. © RSPB 2020. Illustrations by Mike Langford (rspb-images.com)

Big
Garden
Birdwatch
29-31 January 2021

Listen to Mrs Ramsey read the next part of the story - pages 87 to 89, pause the video and answer the following questions.

Orange street lamps are described as looking like 'spiny iron trees' and the cars (which Varjak still thinks are dogs) are described as 'shiny metal monsters'. Can you think of your own way to describe the street lamps and the cars?

**tall, black poles
big, flat metal.**

The author repeats phrases in this part of the book - 'one after another after another', 'it made him cough and cough and cough' and 'he could do it'. He could do it'. Why do you think he does this? What does it make you feel like when you hear it repeated?

**because he didn't do it
once he did it over and
over again it made me
want to cough**

What do you think is meant by 'Their yellow eyes were open'?

**there open
and he
could see
there colour**

Can you find another word for 'courage'?

**bravery or
bravness or
daring**

THE TIMES
Wednesday 24th June 1911
3d
Palace Parade

Yesterday, our Most
admiral and Respected
Monarch celebrated the
most lovely birthday
on the throne. Her
Royal Majesty has
broken the record
for the longest king
or queen on the throne.

Whilst she was away
the streets were being
transformed into a bright
and colorful place. It
was said that people
sleep out side to get a
good spot.

The parade started
with a huge bang!
To be precise it
was a 6 pound Cannon.
It was fired when the
queen left Buckingham
Palace. As the queen
passed lots of people
started to sing the
national anthem.

Our glorious Empire
covers a
quarter of the population
of the world. Which they
say they are Queen
Victoria's Subjects. She
has countless titles.

The brilliant celebrations
began with a private
thanksgiving service at
Windsor Castle.



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Tips for Home Learning

Schools provide a structure in which children find reassurance and certainty. Think about how you will structure your days. Stick to regular get up times and bed-time and have time for learning, playing and resting. Don't worry if learning time has to come after or around your own work but let your children know when learning time will be each day.

We know that lots of you will be forced to juggle home schooling with your own jobs. Just do your best with home learning and ask for help if you are struggling. Prioritise reading, phonics, writing and number based activities if you are limited for time. Children should be able to access stories and some videos independently too.

Talk to your child about their learning, their worries, their interests, their questions. Be honest with them about why life is so different so that they understand and can make sense of what is going on.

Your structure can change from day to day but tell children in advance when things will happen if you can.



Remember that no one expects you to replicate what your children would be getting in school. Teaching isn't easy but every thing you do will have some impact on your children's learning. Just do what you can!

Make sure that you have some down time each day or evening. Children in school have lots of play opportunities each day.

No one is judging you and this is not a competition. Don't get drawn into comparing what you are managing to do with anyone else.

We are still here every day and will happily talk to you about any aspect of your child's learning or well-being.

If you need help or support, please get in touch with us here at school, either by phone 0191 2853453 or email admin@southgosforth.newcastle.sch.uk