

Preston Grange Primary School

Newsletter – June 15th 2020



What have we been up to?

Firstly, as with all of our families, class teachers have been extremely busy. All of our staff have been juggling their own family lives as well as doing home learning with their children. Some teachers have young families, and have been in the very same situation as everyone else with young families in this crisis. They have not had childcare, as most of our parents will understand. We appreciate it has been a balancing act between work and supporting children for all of us, our staff included, during this very unusual situation. We have been in the same boat as everyone in the country; staff having to work from home whilst supporting and managing their own children. All staff have worked through their holidays and instead of taking Easter and May half term off, surrendered their holidays to support our key worker families and parents of vulnerable children. Staff would not have had it any other way, and we know that our key worker families are extremely grateful for this, as we are to them.

Behind the scenes staff have been:

- working in school to provide cover for vulnerable and key worker children on a regular basis
- planning the new curriculum for September. We are completely re-writing our curriculum and teachers have written six subjects at this current time
- planning weekly home learning
- carrying out directed tasks
- writing children's annual reports
- supervising own children & their home learning
- doing online CPD (webinars) whole staff plus individual CPD
- teams meetings with local authority advisers and agencies
- contacting parents of SEN children
- hand delivering home learning to vulnerable children & supporting families with phone calls
- carrying out a requisition of curriculum resources for Autumn term
- staff meetings – we have been holding staff briefing and staff meeting each week
- leadership meetings – we hold leadership meetings, governor committee meetings
- phone calls, meetings with outside agencies eg. family support partners, social workers

Thank you

I recently met with Year 3 parents via a Zoom meeting and this was extremely valuable and enabled me to get a feel of some of the questions that parents may have and I have compiled them below for all parents.

Questions

| Question | Response |
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| Can teachers teach over Zoom either on a group or one to one basis? | <p>It isn't practical to teach over Zoom. Parents may have seen this during the whole class sessions we tried, as it was not totally effective or manageable. The teachers also do not have the time to be teaching over Zoom since they are in school currently supporting key worker & vulnerable children.</p> |
| The children have lost their motivation to complete their home learning | <p>This is a concern to all of us, and thank you to Year 3 parents for bringing this to my attention. The home learning was always designed so that it did not put too much pressure on parents to have to 'teach' the content. To be completely honest, it has been planned so that the children were able to access the learning independently. Having spoken to some children over Zoom myself, I can now see that sometimes the children may <i>prefer</i> to have you alongside helping them, but it should not be necessary. They should have been able to get on with most of their work independently.</p> <p>But if they are not motivated to do the work as time goes on, we needed to do something. Therefore, following talking to parents and some Year 3 children, we have come up collaboratively with an amended home learning system which introduces castle points as a reward system. Please see further details below.</p> |
| How definite are you that all children will return after Summer? | <p>As you may already know, the situation is beginning to look a lot more positive across the country with the lockdown being lifted gradually and the death rate continues to drop.</p> <p>However there are currently restrictions on schools. There is the 'bubble' rule. At the moment, for us to return to school, we have to arrange children into 'bubbles' with a teacher. The government guidance states that up to 15 children can be in a 'bubble', but in Early Years and Key Stage 1, most schools considering or starting to return, have reduced the number of children in a bubble, for example to 1:6, one teacher to six children. The adult may not change, nor may the children within the bubble and the children have to stay with that adult across the day including at playtimes and lunchtimes. For this reason, with only having ten teachers, you can see that we will always face a problem while this rule of a maximum of 15 children in a bubble exists. If the bubble rule changes or is taken away, then we will be in a much better position to be confident that all children can return in September.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning at this point that we have staff still shielding until the end of June. Therefore, we do not currently have all teachers and support staff at work, as we are restricted with the number of bubbles that we could make at this current time. We have 10 teachers and some of the teachers are part-time. The full time equivalent we have is 8.8 teachers, which at this present time, would only allow four classes to return.</p> <p>I am positive that in the next few weeks, the bubble rule restriction may be lifted. It is extremely limiting, and I am aware that parents are anxious about how confident we are in the whole school returning for</p> |

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| | <p>September, so I hope that you may understand more clearly the restrictions we face. We desperately want everyone back at the start of September but we need some criteria to be lifted.</p> <p>In practical terms, space is also an issue, with us only having 8 classrooms an ICT suite and a mobile classroom. It is an option to perhaps use gazebo type outdoor temporary 'housing' for some classes in September, but if the bubble rule of a maximum of 15 children still exists, it is the number of teachers that is a restriction to even using temporary marquees/gazebos.</p> |
| Do you need any help from the parents to get everything ready for re-opening? | <p>I would like to thank the Year 3 parents and Mr Constable for the support and many other offers of help. We are really grateful for this. We may well need some help from next week onwards, and so I will clarify what we need in the next newsletter on Friday. Thank you everyone for your amazing support.</p> |
| Can the teachers do Zoom calls to the children more often? | <p>Since lockdown began, we have done the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one to one zoom with individual children • A whole class zoom • A school council zoom • Group zoom calls (ongoing currently) <p>We receive regular updates from the Local Authority and we are aware that our school has done more face-to-face personal contact and zoom calls than any local school. We feel that we have kept in touch with the children as much as we can, given the other responsibilities we have.</p> |
| Are we as parents doing the right things with home schooling | <p>Please do not worry about how you have handled home learning. We are grateful for your support in these very difficult circumstances. If anything, your encouragement and making sure your child is happy are the key priorities during this time we feel. We know the pressures on yourselves, and appreciate that you have done your best. Our newly 'tweaked' home learning with a reward system we feel will benefit the children's motivation greatly.</p> |
| Can the children submit their work to teachers & get some feedback? | <p>Most parents during lockdown have used the class email and twitter messages to share some work or photographs of the children. If you haven't please read below, and share your child's work with us via the specially set up class email address for use during lockdown for this reason.</p> |
| What is the long term plan? | <p>Please see below what the leadership team and I have been planning.</p> |
| Can the teachers record audio messages to motivate the children to complete their home learning? | <p>Starting from today, your child's class teacher will record a message that will be emailed out to you one day in the week. This cannot always be the same day due to the teachers working in school. This message will not go through the home learning for the week, but rather, will encourage and try to motivate your child with their home learning.</p> <p>We hope that the children respond very positively to these weekly messages.</p> |
| How will you catch the | <p>This is our role, it always has been and always will be. Teachers are experts in identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' understanding.</p> |

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| <p>children up with the lost learning time?</p> | <p>Once we return to school, after spending time allowing the children to focus on friendships, and us focussing on the social and emotional wellbeing of the children, we will assess the children across school in key areas of Spelling, Reading, Maths and Writing. Following this, we will plan what the curriculum and teaching will look like. The government also plan to announce measures for catching up children's learning; we await news about what that will involve.</p> <p>However, we are also expecting the children to have progressed in other areas of development-this should not be all negative about gaps in knowledge and understanding. Some children will have grown in confidence, some will have increased general knowledge from spending time with adults. Children may have developed a love for reading given all of the time that they have had to themselves, some may have done all of their reading and home learning and so there may be few gaps to close. Skills such as resilience, attitude and independence may also have increased in some children. Pride in their own work, some may have learnt a new skill. We can't yet say how the children will return to us, but we will be ready to deal with anything that arises. We just can't wait to get them all back to school and see them form relationships and friendships again with friends and staff. The children's wellbeing is the priority to us initially, and we will be using Thrive as a way to support children as we usually do.</p> |
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What have the leadership team been doing?

We have been receiving a great deal of constant information from the Local Authority, Teaching Unions, Health & Safety team and Human Resources about re-opening school and even more guidance from the Department of Education, whose guidance has changed 181 times and has been updated as recently as today.

We have met with the Governing Body and committees of the Governing Body. In addition to this, we have been making some safeguarding changes in order to prepare for re-opening & establishing safe practices in school in line with the DFE requirements and ordered PPE for administering first aid. We have been considering and working on several scenarios for the re-opening of school and carrying out multiple risk assessments.

The situation looks far more positive from a safety point of view than before. We have been planning different possible scenarios outlining how we may be able to get children back to school, whilst taking into account: the bubble rule, the number of shielded staff (this is a considerable issue in our small school), the number of staff from July 1st once shielding is ended and the physical space in school.

We have a governor meeting this week and a further newsletter will be sent to families this Friday.

Reward system – Home learning

From today, each week your child's class teacher will send via email a short video message to motivate the children with their home learning. Using the checklist sheets which we have sent out in the post to all families we would ask that parents then fill in the empty lines, listing the home learning for that week.

The checklist sheet is for the children to use to keep themselves on track, it is a 'things to do' list and it is for them to complete it. There is a traffic light column for them to colour if they found it tricky (red) ok (amber) or green (fine) This is a self-assessment activity for the

children. Should they highlight any task as red, we would ask that you tell your child's class teacher in the email at the end of the week.

During the week, the children should be ticking off when they have completed each piece of home learning they have done. At the end of the week, we ask that you email the class email account attaching one piece of work that your child has done. The class teacher may specify on their video what this should be. Along with attaching this one piece of work, please let the teacher know the effort and motivation your child has shown across the week, and also how much *reading* your child has done. Class teachers will allocate castle points to your child based on two things: effort and reading. They will email you back telling your child how many castle points they have earned. Staff will then use our excel sheet to collate the castle points, and this will give us a winning castle each week....the virtual castle of the week! This will then be tweeted each Monday.

Huge thanks to all of the Year 3 parents, it was through discussion with themselves, along with Ruairidh, Charlie & Owen that this idea came about. We hope that the children enjoy the competition of earning virtual castle points each week!

How can you help during the last few weeks?

The government state that Reading will be a key priority as we return to school. Please ensure that your child is reading every day. You will notice that on our home learning checklists for the children to use, we have specifically asked the children to record home reading, and given guidelines as to how many minutes per day each year group should be reading to themselves (at the top of the checklist). In these last few weeks please encourage your child to read every single day throughout the Summer holidays. Thank you for your support.



Also, how about considering having a movie night, and watch the film 'Inside Out'. The film allows children to understand their emotions and feelings, it breaks down barriers and allows them to consider their own wellbeing. It may be a start to a discussion about how they are feeling towards the end of lockdown & a return to school.

Summer holidays

We will be providing cover for key worker and vulnerable children until the end of the Summer term, Friday 17th July. There will be no cover for vulnerable children or key workers during the school summer holidays.

Teacher Training Days 2020 – 2021

The following dates are training days next academic year:

Tuesday 1st September 2020

Monday 4th January 2021

Monday 7th June 2021

Update to policies

Ahead of lockdown, there were some changes that we made to our Online Safety Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy. Please find the updated policies on our website.

Thrive-Online Parent Toolkit

We are delighted to inform parents of the first FREE release of the new Thrive Parent Toolkit! Designed to support parents with children aged 4 to 11, the toolkit helps you ensure the time and interactions you have with your children make a positive difference – supporting their wellbeing and building their emotional resilience.

The toolkit offers a selection of strategies and activities designed to help children feel special and safe during these uncertain times. It is not a parenting programme but a toolkit to support the wellbeing of everyone in the family. Click here to find out more: <https://mythrive.uk/36bjpSf>

You will need to set up your own account to use the toolkit; it's completely separate from the area of Thrive-Online. Once you have set up an account all of the information is private to you. The toolkit is free to access, you just need to enter a few details to set up an account. In the 'reason for registering' please select 'other' and then type in 'Parent Toolkit', and then leave the organisation fields blank.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

Tracey Taylor

Headteacher

June 15th 2020