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Friday 29th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Spring Term 2021 – Headteacher Update #7

Wasn't the snow a blessing! A spot of light relief, and heart-warming to see and hear families outside relishing the opportunity to have fun (at a safe distance, of course).

Yesterday we heard from the government that the partial closure of schools will continue until at least 8th March. Although not unexpected it is still extremely disappointing yet understandable. Our Home Learning provision was initially planned back in September to bridge a 2 week period of class self-isolation. It is now morphing into a provision that will run for many weeks. To reflect this change in duration we have made, and will continue to make, tweaks to our provision. We will be asking staff, parents and children to share their views via a questionnaire before half term.

Our provision at all times seeks to live and achieve our school vision statement: **'To be a school that reflects the love of Christ: cherishing each other as unique individuals and challenging all to achieve and succeed'**.

Alongside this we have the following aims at this time:

- To maximise use of school resources to enable effective teaching and learning, both at home and at school.
- To promote and enable positive well-being for all in our school community.
- To provide a model of Home Learning that provides a high amount of direct teacher-child contact.
- To have in place a model of Home Learning that encourages development of Behaviours for Learning (the 6Rs), as well as independence.
- To ensure that our provision is accessible to all children, taking into account any barriers to learning due to SEN or other factors.

In implementing our provision there are clearly limits to what we can do, and what works for one home set-up may not meet the aspirations of another. We are balancing many competing expectations. However the number of encouraging and positive communications we are receiving from parents tells us that we are getting it right most of the time for most of the people. The engagement from home with our Home Learning has been stunningly high so far – thank you for this.

Reading – please do it every day, no skimping

Ensuring that children continue to read regularly and enjoy a range of texts is key to their continued educational progress in all areas of the curriculum. We have a number of ideas for supporting this at home and at school. For example we are introducing group reading lessons via Zoom for every Year 5 and Year 6 child once a fortnight. Miss Mistry has designed a 'Spring Reading Challenge' which we have attached to this email for the children to complete at home. Certificates will be awarded at the end of February for reading 5, 10 or 15 books. It has been set on the VLE as a homework. Children need to fill in the rows with the books they have read over Home Learning and upload the completed sheet onto the VLE for their teacher by **Thursday 11th February**.



Staff Lateral Flow Tests

From this week we have begun testing staff for Covid-19 using the DfE/NHS issued Lateral Flow Tests. These tests will help to pick up both symptomatic and asymptomatic cases. No positive results so far. If a staff member does need to self-isolate following positive test this will impact on our provision at home and/or school. We have contingency plans in place to ensure that at least some of the provision can continue.

Children's Mental Health Week

Work set in the week beginning 8th February will change slightly. The Zoom lessons and the morning focus on English and maths will still take place. However the afternoon activities will provide opportunities to explore ways of promoting positive children's' mental health.

IT / Computing Equipment

Two questions: (i) do you need any IT equipment to help make Home Learning run more smoothly? (ii) do you have any spare or unused IT equipment that you are able to loan / donate to others to help them deliver Home Learning? Please email me, Mrs Barker or to the school office if either apply to you.

Feedback and Marking

We are aware that children and parents appreciate teacher feedback/marking of work completed at home, and teachers enjoy seeing how well children are doing at home. There are a few hurdles that we are striving to overcome in this area, and we may never get to a point that we aspire to. Currently children upload a weekly 'Big Write' which the teachers provide feedback on. There is also a lot of direct feedback and marking taking place during the Zoom lessons (the most effective form of providing feedback). We are introducing an assessment task at the end of each maths unit which will enable teachers to gauge the depth of understanding achieved by each child (please let your child do this independently). Children also upload work to the VLE which they want their teacher to see on an ad hoc basis. We are trialling other tweaks in this area with some year groups.

Assemblies

If you have not yet accessed the weekly assemblies loaded on to the 'VLE Assembly Page' please do so. Assemblies are a communal affair, so if possible please watch them with your child as there are always points to discuss and reflect on. The foci of the school assemblies are 'The 6Rs: Behaviours for Learning'. We are hopeful that these will provide a framework for you and your child(ren) to discuss effective learning behaviours.

Exercise Books

We have bought one A4 lined and one A4 squared exercise book for each child. These will be outside the school gates on Monday 1st February (9.30am to 4.30pm) – weather dependent - for you to collect whilst you are out and about on your daily exercise.

Photography Challenge

Are there any budding photographers out there? Has your child noticed anything interesting on your daily exercise walks? Do you have a family pet who has been loving spending time with you at home? Or a craft project perhaps that your child has been working on whilst at home? If the answer to any of these questions is 'YES' then we would like to hear from you. We are going to create a 'photo wall' on the railings outside school which captures all that our BJS family have been up to during the last few weeks. We are hoping that we can laminate the pictures to weatherproof them and then create a display for members of our school and wider community to enjoy as they are out on their daily exercise.

Whenever your child captures the right moment in a photograph, please send an email of the image to Mrs Barker (rbarker@busbridge-junior.surrey.sch.uk) and then watch and wait for your image to appear on the railings outside of school.



February Half-Term In-School Critical Worker Provision

Please note that in line with DfE guidance there will not be Critical Worker provision in our school or any school in Godalming.

Spring Term Parents Evenings

These are provisionally scheduled for the week beginning 22nd March 2021. However if the partial school closure continues we may move to daytime Pupil Progress Zooms which we will hold over a couple of afternoons, inviting both parents and child to attend.

Friends of Busbridge CofE Junior School PTA

There are still some Friends of BJS PTA tea towels up for grabs. If you missed out before Christmas you have a second chance – but you'll need to be quick. If you wish to buy one and by doing so contribute to PTA funds – please contact Katherine Carter (BJSSecretary@busbridge-junior.surrey.sch.uk).

During our recent PTA committee meeting we discussed a number of whole school, community activities which will help bring us together (e.g. an online pantomime show).

Additional community support

Last week in my update I mentioned that Seymours estate agents in Godalming are offering to print anything that will help children with their work (simply email them the content to print). There are other support mechanisms out there in the community too. We have listed a few on the attached document.

Hardship and Food Poverty

We are very aware of the negative impact this shut down will be having on families in many ways, especially financially. Those families who meet the threshold to receive 'free school meals' due to their income, benefits etc. are receiving some extra support. If you are experiencing hardship but didn't previously qualify for 'free school meals' do get in touch as we may be able to arrange some support for you, or you may now qualify for entitlement to 'free school meals' support. There has been a lot in the news recently about food poverty. We have ways of helping if you are struggling. Please ask.

Safeguarding

Please remember that If you have a Safeguarding concern around any child please contact us or Surrey Children's Services: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/childrens-social-care/contact-childrens-services> or phone 0300 470 9100.

The leadership team has been busy devising contingency plans should illness or close contact cause a staff member or in-school child to self-isolate. On the last count we had 15 different possible scenarios to consider. Hopefully these won't be needed. Remembering the 'HandsFaceSpace' guidance will certainly help us carry on with our new normal.

Take care

Kind regards



Richard Catchpole (Headteacher)

