

Highworth Combined School

Dear all

We are nearly at the half term holiday! I know that there are not many options, but I hope the break from school will give you and your children a well earned break from Remote Learning.

We return to school on Monday 22nd February which is also the day on which the Prime Minister has told us that he will make an announcement about plans for the return of children to school from the 8th March at the earliest. Throughout the pandemic, schools have not been given advanced notice of changes to operation and I do not expect this time to be any different. Once I have heard from Mr Johnson and consulted with the senior leadership team and governors, I will write with news of our plans (if there are any changes) as soon as I can. For the 2 weeks between 22nd February and 5th March, all current arrangements will remain in place.

If you have a few minutes to spare this half term, without Remote Learning, you might like to investigate this link to a workshop for parents of primary aged children. The blurb for the event says:

Join us for Primary Parenting, a light-hearted event about the ups and downs of raising under twelves. Rob Parsons and Katharine Hill will present insights and top tips gathered from their combined experience of working alongside thousands of parents for over thirty years. You may laugh, you may cry, but we hope to leave you feeling uplifted and inspired.

<https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/events/events-online-2/primary-parenting-catch-up>

It seems a shame to bring your attention to the return to school before we have even broken up, but the teachers have been busy preparing welcome back messages which will be ready and waiting for you on the morning of 22nd February. Instructions for where to find these messages are included in Mondays Remote Learning messages from year groups.

Thank you for booking appointments for your children to catch up with their teachers; we know that children and teachers have very enjoyed the sessions. Sessions for the week of 22nd February are shown below.

A guide with instructions on how to make an appointment can be found at the bottom of this Newsletter.

This link gives advice on how to access your booked appointment: <https://support.parentseveningsystem.co.uk/article/801-video-parents-how-to-attend-appointments-over-video-call>

Please book appointments for the classes listed here from Friday 12th February:

- Nursery: Tuesday 23rd Feb: 2pm-3.30pm
- RCA: Wednesday 24th Feb: 10am-11.30am
- 3FM: Wednesday 24th Feb: 1.30pm-3pm
- 3MP: Thursday 25th Feb: 10am-11.30am
- RC Thursday 25th Feb: 1pm-2.30pm
- 4TS: Friday 26th Feb: 10am-11.30am
- 4NS: Friday 26th Feb: 1pm-2.30pm

Today's assembly is now available on the website. Many thanks to Tracey Thomas for turning my ramblings into BSL. Please navigate as follows: go to the Highworth Combined School website; click on the tab 'Arrangements During Pandemic'; click on 'Video Messages'; click on 'Friday Assemblies'; click the play button. Alternatively, try this

link: https://highworth.eschools.co.uk/web/arrangements_during_pandemic/503221

We had arranged our next Parents Evenings for the middle of March, but have decided to postpone this event until May. With children not back at school until after 8th March at the earliest, we felt that you would know more about your children's learning than we do! The dates for your diary are now May 18th and 20th. More information is available on the calendar on the school website.

Long standing members of our community will know that unfortunately, our building has been designated as a polling station by local government, resulting in school closure on election days. Although I have been trying to change this arrangement, I have not yet been successful. This is important because the next elections requiring use of the building take place on

6th May 2021. I have received this information from the Department for Education today:

The government has confirmed that local elections will go ahead on Thursday 6 May as planned. Given significant disruptions already to education this year, returning officers have been asked to avoid using schools as polling stations, where it is practically possible to do so.

I hope that this means I will be able to persuade the local returning officer to use a different venue, but if this is not possible, I thought it wise to give you notice now of potential school closure (with Remote Learning) on the 6th May. More information to follow.

Financial pressures for many are huge right now so please see some information below about qualification for Free School Meals. This is also available on our website.

My very best wishes for the half term break

Clare Pankhania

Parents' Guide for Booking Appointments



Browse to <https://highworth.schoolcloud.co.uk/>



Step 1: Login

Fill out the details on the page then click the *Log In* button.

A confirmation of your appointments will be sent to the email address you provide.

Step 2: Select Parents' Evening

Click on the date you wish to book.

Unable to make all of the dates listed? Click *I'm unable to attend*.

Step 3: Select Booking Mode

Choose *Automatic* if you'd like the system to suggest the shortest possible appointment schedule based on the times you're available to attend. To pick the times to book with each teacher, choose *Manual*. Then press *Next*.

We recommend choosing the automatic booking mode when browsing on a mobile device.

Step 4: Choose Teachers

If you chose the automatic booking mode, drag the sliders at the top of the screen to indicate the earliest and latest you can attend.

Select the teachers you'd like to book appointments with. A green tick indicates they're selected. To de-select, click on their name.

Step 5a (Automatic): Book Appointments

If you chose the automatic booking mode, you'll see provisional appointments which are held for 2 minutes. To keep them, choose *Accept* at the bottom left.

If it wasn't possible to book every selected teacher during the times you are able to attend, you can either adjust the teachers you wish to meet with and try again, or switch to manual booking mode (Step 5b).

Step 5b (Manual): Book Appointments

Click any of the green cells to make an appointment. Blue cells signify where you already have an appointment. Grey cells are unavailable.

To change an appointment, delete the original by hovering over the blue box and clicking *Delete*. Then choose an alternate time.

Once you're finished booking all appointments, at the top of the page in the alert box, press *click here* to finish the booking process.

Step 6: Finished

All your bookings now appear on the *My Bookings* page. An email confirmation has been sent and you can also print appointments by pressing *Print*. Click *Subscribe to Calendar* to add these and any future bookings to your calendar.

To change your appointments, click on *Amend Bookings*.

Arrangements for families who currently qualify to receive Benefits Related
Free School Meals

- Vouchers are sent electronically
- Vouchers are for the value of 1 week's meals for each child; £15
- Vouchers are sent at the beginning of each qualifying week

If you think that you now qualify for Benefits Related Free School Meals:

You may have heard of the Government scheme to support families by providing vouchers for those children who receive Free School Meals. Understandably, this is causing confusion. All children from Reception up to Year 2 receive what are called Universal Infant Free School Meals, regardless of the financial circumstances of their family. However, vouchers are only being issued to those families who qualify for Benefits Related Free School Meals. Buckinghamshire Council provide the school with a list of children who qualify for this benefit and their families have been sent vouchers accordingly.

I am very aware that many families who did not previously qualify for this benefit, sadly, now do. We would like to start providing vouchers to more families as quickly as possible. If you think that you now qualify for Benefits Related Free School Meals because of a change in your financial circumstances, please urgently

email office@highworthcombined.co.uk with the following information:

- Names of children who are pupils at our school
- Full name of the main wage earner
- Date of birth of main wage earner
- National Insurance number of the main wage earner

We will use this information to check for eligibility. If you are eligible, your details will appear on our database of qualifying families and you will start to receive vouchers. Please be aware that there is time lag between you applying for additional benefits and us being notified that you are eligible.

I know that you are juggling a lot of demands right now, but the sooner we get this information the sooner we can start the process.