

Highworth Combined School

Dear all

Is it only 2 days the start of term? I am sure that the pressures of remote learning have made these 2 days feel at least double that length to some of you, both parents and teachers! Not one of us wants to be in the position in which we find ourselves again, but it is important for us all to remember that school operation has changed to keep us all safe from the deadly COVID virus.

As a head teacher I feel conflicted. The Department for Education and Buckinghamshire Local Education Authority have made it very clear that schools need to set high expectations for Remote Learning during this further period of lockdown, and I do appreciate the importance of this given how severely school attendance has been impacted. I also have some understanding of the realities of life at home with young children, not enough devices and the pressure to earn a living. There is no easy answer to finding a solution that suits us all.

Please know that we really appreciate all your efforts with Remote Learning. Many staff here are also juggling the considerable demands of family, work and learning and we have every sympathy with the difficulties you face. We will always try to offer support if we can so please don't be afraid to ask by contacting me, members of the senior team, or class teachers, through the year group email addresses. We will always try to do our best and I know that you will too.

A reminder that teachers posted welcome back videos on the school website this week. If you and your children haven't already seen them, you can find them under the heading 'Video Messages' here:

https://www.highworth.bucks.sch.uk/web/free_school_meals/531931

Please see some information below about Free School Meals. This is also available on our website.

My very best wishes for the weekend

Clare Pankhania

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.