



Ox Close Federation Newsletter

April 24th 2020



Welcome to the Summer Term

This week is officially the first week of the summer term. Of course, the current circumstances are most unusual and are challenging in many ways. We have adapted to the situation and are clear about what our aims are. While providing emergency childcare, chiefly for key workers, we are also trying really hard to provide the best possible provision under the circumstances. Our wider objectives are to maintain learning and to maintain community. Both of these objectives are tough to achieve when social contact is so understandably limited due to COVID-19. I can promise you that we will do our absolute best to achieve everything that we can so that we are in the best possible position when some semi normality returns.

Maintaining the Ox Close Community

Our attempts to maintain the fabulous Ox Close community centre around the strategy of effective communication, something which is vital in any crisis situation. From prior to the school closures, we have tried to communicate clearly and effectively and keep parents up to date. Making online connections is crucial through social media and from trying to facilitate events where that online community can join in one purpose. Yesterday, we aimed to bring people together for St George's Day and for an Ox Close Cheer at 10.30am. I would like to thank those people who took part and shared their contributions on the Facebook page. We will be asking people to join in with other future events and I think that it is heartening when parents and children can share and feel connected at this most surreal of times.

Easter Competition Winners

I decided to run two competitions over Easter and it was fabulous to see so many entries online. Both the Ox Close Bake Off and the Easter Creations competitions were very popular and it proved to be incredibly tough to judge, especially with only social media or email evidence. It took 10 hours on Tuesday to collate, check and judge all entries. I would like to thank each and every child for entering and parents for sending the entries. I announced the winners in the podcast earlier. Congratulations to all of the winners and commiserations to everyone else.

For the Bake off, receiving £10 Amazon vouchers:

N: Vinnie

R: Willow

1/2: Oscar

3/4: Scarlett R

5/6: Lewis T for his biscuits

Also receiving £10 Amazon vouchers, for the Easter Creation Competition:

N: Tommy

R: Lily R

1/2: Aria H

3/4: Eva Mae and Eden

5/6: Emily C

St George's Day and the Ox Close Cheer

Thank you to everyone who joined in today as part of the Ox Close community. It was fantastic to see so many people taking part, dressing in their colours, having picnics and even ringing their own bells- adults, children and dogs alike! I would like to continue to hold similar events and I loved that a number of people went for a musical theme. Perhaps we should try an Ox Close percussion next week- it would be amazing for the children to be able to hear each other even if they cannot currently be physically together

Ox Close Podcast

Today's Ox Close podcast was another tactic which is aimed to address the objective of maintaining communication and community. I apologise if the sound quality was not perfect- I recorded in my kitchen on my MacBook and so it was not the most sophisticated situation and I hope to improve the podcasts as we go. I had the idea of parents nominating children for upholding the values of the Federation at home. In this week's podcast, I announced the nominations for children who had shown determination and perseverance, learned new skills and also kept themselves and others safe. It was brilliant to see and hear about the amazing exploits of children from right across the Ox Close Federation and all nominees will be receiving a special Executive Certificate. I am hoping that parents will take photographs of their children with the certificates and post these online next week. Our next podcast will be recorded on Wednesday afternoon and will go live at 10am on Friday morning.

Star Guests

This week's special guest was the wonderful Sam Jackson. Sam is such a lovely guy and a terrific professional and he goes back a long way with Ox Close. I am sure that listeners will have enjoyed learning more about him. Next week we are hoping to have Adam Bushnell as a guest. If you have any questions for Adam then please email us at nominations@durhamlearning.net.

Next Week's Nominations

We are looking for children in the following categories: showing kindness; learning new skills and keeping themselves and others safe. Please email any nominations to nominations@durhamlearning.net, our new dedicated inbox and state the name of your child, their class or group and which category or categories which you are nominating them for.

Staff Messages

I would like to thank the staff for recording their fantastic messages for the children. Miss Bowden and Mr Crowther have done a great job co-ordinating these and posting them on Facebook and the website. I am sure that seeing and hearing from the staff has been popular with the children and also helps us to keep our community together.

Maintaining Learning

It is vital that we do all that we can to maintain learning for all children. We are pleased with what we are currently offering and I would suggest that it compares favourably with what is on offer at most other schools. Miss Bowden, Mr Crowther and all of the staff have worked incredibly hard on this and, indeed, they were doing so long before the Government took the belated decision to close schools. We will always strive to improve what we are offering and we are continuing to investigate how we might make safe digital connections and interactions, with some virtual meetings for this following next week. I would also love to know what your opinions are on what we are offering and might be able to realistically offer and so we will be sending a SurveyMonkey out on this, hopefully next week some time.

Celebrate Home Learning Week

Next week's challenge is to share your amazing learning on Facebook as part of our Celebrate Home Learning Week. We know that lots of brilliant things will be going on and we would love it if you could show your friends what you have been up to by posting pictures of your home learning.

Thank you Mrs Smart

I must thank Mrs Smart for her excellent work recently under incredibly challenging circumstances. The crisis has created a large bureaucratic burden and Mrs Smart has worked away diligently, adapting to home working as well as being in the office on occasion.

Stay Safe

Our next scheduled newsletter is due out on May 8th 2020. Until then, stay safe and take care.

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher