

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



November 6th 2020 Volume 9

Consultation on Amalgamation of Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery

By now, I am sure that everyone will be aware that Durham County Council is proposing to replace the current Ox Close Primary and Nursery Schools into a new build. This is a result of the County Council's review of the raising need for school places in the town and this is the County's proposed solution. The 2 schools would be relocated in that new build, but there will also be sufficient space in it for the number of pupils there will be in the future in Spennymoor so that all families living in Spennymoor will be able to get a place at one of the primary schools in the town.

Consultation started on amalgamating the two schools as part of that proposal on Monday and you should have received a copy of the consultation proposal - please let us know if you have not as we are keen for people to have a say in a legitimate and appropriate manner. This process is managed and decided by the council. **Whilst Ox Close Primary and Oxclose Nursery have no part in that decision, we have been given the opportunity to express our views as have parents and the community.** Miss Bowden, Mrs Taylor and I are 100% committed to providing the very best possible education and care for all of the pupils at Ox Close, both those that are here now and future pupils. That commitment is unwavering and will remain our focus no matter what the situation is and I believe that parents understand this. The caring ethos and outstanding pastoral care that are the hallmark of both the School and the Nursery will remain in place.

The process must be respected and all stakeholders should express their views through the current consultation process, everyone must respect that process. School Governors and staff can see there may be opportunities that build on the strengths of the 2 current schools and create a bespoke learning environment. In a sense, it is extremely flattering that the County Council wish to involve our schools and leaders in this ambitious project. **Therefore, IF the council does agree the amalgamation of the two schools in a new build, we will look to work closely with the council to ensure that both the amalgamation and the new build will provide the very best possible environment and experience for every child. Please do take the opportunity to express your views through the consultation process, which will last for 6 weeks.**

3/4 Bubble

Today marks the return to school of our Year 3/4 bubble after their period of self-isolation, the first that we have experienced this year. When the news came through early on the Saturday morning, Miss Bowden and I had to spring into action and the challenge of accessing the necessary advice and then communicating it was huge. We were able to work together to organise all of the communication and Miss Bowden being available to speak to parents on the phone was invaluable. I would like to thank Miss Bowden who, as ever, was a tower of strength! Thank you to parents for their understanding too - the situation was not easy for anyone. We have learned lots from the process and as and when we face this situation again we will be more equipped to deal with it.

3/4 Virtual Learning

This week we have organised live virtual teaching for the children in the Year 3/4 bubble. We have been preparing for this scenario for some time and the staff have done an excellent job. I have spoken to some staff, children and parents and they have been positive about the Zoom sessions, while we have also organised for surveys for all of those groups as it is important that we take feedback and continue to look to improve what we offer. We appreciate that there is no perfect solution as often parents have to work during the day too. However, our aim is to minimise the amount of lost learning and I would like to thank all of the staff for their innovative approaches and commitment to approaching learning in a flexible way.

'Open the Window' and Harvest Hearts

Our Harvest Hearts initiative proved to be popular with the recipients, as many of you will have seen on our Facebook page. I was thrilled with all of the feedback and it was lovely to see the post with Ward 23 of the Freeman and the heart display that they had made. It is an amazing team there and I am thrilled that the warm messages from our lovely children helped to brighten the day for the children who are spending time on the ward. I was also so pleased that we managed to cheer Auntie Marion. It is especially important in this crazy current world that we teach the children the value of being kind and considerate to others.

I have some ideas for Christmas and look forward to sharing those soon. Although we know that we are likely to face disruption this term, I am still determined that we will make Christmas an enjoyable time for the children. I have discussed the ideas with Miss Bowden and we will organise the activities soon.

Parent Consultations - 23rd, 24th and 25th November

Due to the current situation, we are not able to hold these as face to face meetings however we value the relationship we have with parents and still want to meet with parents and share how your child has settled in and is progressing in school. We have therefore decided to hold these via Zoom. Tonight you will receive a text to book your appointment in the normal way and then on the day of the appointment you will receive the information you need to log in to the call. If you do not wish to hold the meeting via Zoom then please let the office know and we can arrange for the class teacher to phone you at a separate time.

COVID-19

If you or anyone in your family are displaying COVID-19 symptoms then the following link is useful in order for you to be able to book a test: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. Alternatively, you can also call 119. Under these circumstances, please keep us informed. It is also important that if anyone in your household, child or adult, displays symptoms or has a test all within the household self isolates. This means that all siblings who live with a child or adult who is displaying symptoms should not attend school until the end of the self-isolation period or after the affected person has had a negative test. Please check by calling the school office if you are unsure. Thank you.

Virtual Classroom

Our Virtual Classroom continues to be available on our school website. There are some children that, as we go through the term, may need to self-isolate for numerous reasons. To ensure that these children are still learning whilst at home, we will upload planning on a weekly basis. These plans contain suggested activities to complete with your child and links to useful websites. In addition, we are also making arrangements to COVID-proof our curriculum in case of further significant longer-term lockdowns. Mrs Harvey has started recording some Geography lessons and she has completed a Years 3/4 unit and is now tackling 1/2 and 5/6.

Class Charts

I am delighted to announce our Class Charts winners of the week and for the half term. In Reception, Matthew B gathered the most points while our top scorer this week in 1/2 was Lily R. In Key Stage 2, Sophie F was the top scorer in 5/6.

Attendance

Despite the particular challenges of COVID-19, our attendance has been excellent since the beginning of term. Once again, I would like to thank parents for their support with this and also to pay tribute to the children and the staff. Class 1/2R had the highest attendance this week with 100%. The overall school attendance this year is 97.6% while this week it has also been 97.6%. The threshold for what is termed as persistent absence has been determined as 90%. **Unfortunately, we are also unable to authorise term time holidays as we have to follow the Government and Durham County protocol. The Durham County protocol explains that penalty notices must be issued 'in instances of unauthorised holidays in term time (where the holiday gives rise to 7 days or more unauthorised absence in any period...).** The school processes absences and then the County Council pick up on unauthorised absence. The Government have now reinstated fines for unauthorised absences and their expectation is that all children will attend school.

Dates for the Diary

Wednesday 18 th November 2020	Flu Vaccination Day
Monday 23 rd , Tuesday 24 th and Wednesday 25 th November 2020	Parent Consultation Evenings – these will be held virtually and more information will follow.
Monday 30th November 2020	PD Day – School Closed
Friday 18 th December 2020	School closes for Christmas holidays
Christmas Holidays	
Monday 4th January 2021	PD Day – School Closed
Tuesday 5 th January 2021	Children back to school

A Bowden

Miss A Bowden
Head of School

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher