

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



Dedicated to Excellence

September 25th 2020 Volume 4

COVID-19 and the Local Lockdown: Grandparents and Informal Childcare

This week there have been local restrictions imposed in the North East but schools have largely not been directly affected by this. The one exception was with regard to 'informal childcare, something which I know was a huge issue for parents and also for many staff too. As I mentioned last week, I wrote to the local MP on behalf of all of the local schools. I did receive a couple of replies and I know that many MPs will have been lobbied on this matter. I am delighted that common sense did prevail in this case and that Grandparents can continue with the informal childcare arrangements. On a broader note, I am pleased that we have so far avoided having to close any bubbles. My aim was always to have effective measures in place to try and reduce risk and I was just hoping that we would be able to build confidence amongst children, staff and parents. So far, we have been fortunate and, while it is inevitable that we will eventually be affected, we will continue to work hard with our arrangements. These arrangements are labour intensive and exhausting but I would like to pay tribute to all of the children and staff for following our systems.

Testing

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. Thank you. Last week, we sent home an information leaflet for parents and I hope that this is useful.

Social Distancing and letter from Durham Public Health to all schools

We appreciate all of the parents help with social distancing at the gates and I would like to pay tribute to Ox Close parents for their co-operation. It would appear that some parents in some other schools are not always following social distancing advice and so we have been asked to send home a letter from Amanda Healy from Durham Public Health. This will be sent tonight via email. Unfortunately, this is a time when the virus is spreading in the region and so it is vital that everyone follows Public Health advice. Thank you for continuing to follow the guidelines and for helping to make Ox Close a safe environment.

Home Learning

While we are delighted with how the return to school has gone, we must prepare ourselves for the time when we have to close bubbles, children are self-isolating or when there is either a 'circuit break' or another national lockdown. I was especially keen that we made every effort to maintain learning during the last lockdown and so we already have a number of systems in place. Yesterday, I discussed plans with Miss Bowden and I am confident that we are well ahead in terms of our arrangements. Planning can be accessed via the website and we continue to operate Year Group emails. Children in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) have Microsoft Office accounts and we have the capacity to run virtual sessions through Teams. We will be renewing passwords for this and also organising further staff training, while we will also look closely at how we can adapt for Reception and Key Stage 1. Last night, we sent out a survey which was asking about Home Learning and access to the internet and devices, as well as your views on the return to school. Thank you for all of your feedback, which has been amazingly positive and will help us to plan for the worst case scenarios. We always take note of all comments and will act upon any concerns or queries where possible, in line with our mantra of 'Be the best that you can be'. We will publish the findings on the website as soon as the survey closes.

Virtual Classroom

As mentioned above, 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.

Class Charts

I am delighted to announce our Class Charts winners of the week. In Reception, Tom D gathered the most points while our top scorer this week in 1/2 was Katie S. In Key Stage 2 Mia C scored highest in 3/4 and Katie S was the top scorer in 5/6.

Maintaining Community

Ox Close is a school which has a long-standing commitment to working with parents and community involvement. This is extremely challenging during COVID 19. Yesterday, I was discussing ideas with Miss Bowden about how we can continue to maintain this sense of community, something which was evident through lockdown with the various live events that we held and from the amazing video which was produced by Rebecca Lawrence and other parents. My intention is that we will offer a 'Window to Ox Close' and hold various events virtually, depending upon parental consent of course. For example, I would like to have an 'Ox Close TV crew' who produce short video features which can go onto our YouTube channel. It is also possible that class assemblies could be held virtually, although this would not be until after Christmas and, again, would depend upon the outcome of consultation with and the consent of parents.

Attendance

Despite the particular challenges of COVID-19, our attendance has been excellent since the beginning of term. I would like to thank parents for their support with this and also to pay tribute to the children and the staff.

Class RB had the highest attendance this week with 100%. The overall school attendance this year is 97.4% while this week it has been 97.4%. 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 14 th October	Phototronics – school photos
Friday 23 rd October 2020	School closes for half term
October Half Term	
Monday 2 nd November 2020	Children back to school
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