

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



December 11th 2020 Volume 14

Christmas Performance: Bringing the community together

After much meticulous planning, hard work and very complicated arrangements, filming for our Christmas Performance is now complete. I was determined that the children would still experience the magic of an Ox Close Primary Christmas this year, despite the difficulties presented by COVID risk assessments and the staff are working so hard to ensure that this happens, while continuing to make vital progress with learning. Brendon Renwick has filmed all children for whom we have permission to include and staff too and is now busy editing the footage to bring it together as one whole school production. I am really looking forward to seeing this when it is complete and it will be released for all parents to see next week - exact details will follow when we have further information. It will be great for the children to see each other on the screen as one community as they are having to exist in their bubbles. Furthermore, it is fantastic that we can try and spread the Christmas cheer and share the performance with parents and our wider community.

Christmas Jumper Day

Today has been National Christmas Jumper Day and it has been fabulous to see the children and staff in their jumpers and beginning to enjoy the Christmas spirit.

End of term date - no change!

There has been much discussion in the media in recent days over our end of term date. This was as on Tuesday 8th December, the Government announced that schools had licence to bring forward a training day and then close to the children next Thursday evening (17th December). **I have to say that the lack of notice for parents made this an absolute non-starter from our point of view** and the subsequent headlines have been unhelpful. The fact is that Miss Bowden and I will have to be available to assist with contact tracing right up to Christmas Eve and there can be and will be no early finish at Ox Close or in other local schools. **School will close at 3.30pm on Friday 18th December as originally scheduled and we hope and pray for a COVID free week ahead.**

Protecting Christmas for all

While COVID-19 is a community virus, everyone can help us to minimise the risk of the spread of infection over the next week. Huge efforts have been undertaken in school to have procedures in school to minimise risks of within school spreading of the virus and we have been lucky so far. Please continue to help us out by being vigilant and by keeping the children at home if they display symptoms or are ill in general. The implication from today onwards of self-isolation would clearly impact upon Christmas for all of those who are affected and this is something which I am sure we are all keen to avoid. Thank you for your support!

Masks at Reception

Please could we remind people to wear a mask if they absolutely have to make a visit to the school reception. There have been a few instances this week when some people have come up to the office and have not been wearing their mask. This measure is to protect staff but also parents themselves. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation with this.

Children's Leadership Team

I have spoken briefly to all of our Children's Leadership team this week and they are going to hold Class Council sessions next week. The aim is for the children to come up with ideas and to give views on school as a class. The Leadership team members will then have a socially distanced meeting with me outside next week in their bubbles. I will then hold a virtual meeting with our Children's Champion, Emily, at the end of next week. Last night, Emily made a presentation to Governors on her role and on how she was elected and she was magnificent. I look forward to involving her closely as we aim to make further improvements to the school in 2021.

Prospective Reception starters for September 2021: Virtual Tour Video

Our initial programme of virtual open meetings for prospective parents is now over and we have had a number of people who have tuned in! We now have a brand-new virtual tour video, which can be seen on our Facebook page. The video captures a day in the life of Ox Close and also features some superb overhead drone footage. Choosing the correct school for your child is vital so if prospective Reception parents have any questions then they can still get in touch with either me or Miss Bowden. I understand that there are still nearly 30% of prospective parents across County Durham who have not yet expressed their preferences. If you know anyone who is in this position then please alert them to our video and let them know that we would be happy to hear from them.

Christmas Cards

The Christmas post boxes are now closed! Thank you very much to everyone who has taken part.

Staff Advent

Thank you to all of the staff for agreeing to take part in the Virtual Advent Calendar. This is another attempt to spread some cheer and I am very grateful to them all for being good sports. If you have not yet seen this feature, check out our Facebook page for your daily dose - there have been some memorable ones already!

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. She will then move onto recording Spring Term Foundation subject lessons so that we are ready for any eventuality after Christmas.

Christmas Parties

Next week is Christmas Party week and the parties will take place on the following days:

Reception	Tuesday 15 th December
Years 1 and 2	Tuesday 15 th December
Years 3 and 4	Monday 14 th December
Years 5 and 6	Thursday 17 th December

Children can come to school in their party clothes. At lunchtime, Karen and her team will provide the children with a party lunch. If your child does not stay for lunch and you would like to order this one-off menu then please log on to Parent Pay and select the red option for the party. Alternatively, you can phone the school office and book through Mrs Smart and Mrs Ozturk. In the event that your child is poorly on these days, please do not send them into school. As mentioned above, we appreciate your support in helping us to try and minimise the spread of the virus at Christmas time.

Good Luck Jason Ainsley

I would like to wish Jason Ainsley all the best as he steps down as manager of Spennymoor Town FC after 14 very successful years. It has been great to see the team doing so well and Jason has been a huge part of the Spennymoor success story. He has always been very co-operative with us, notably when we have had visits from players and even the FA Vase. All the best Jason!

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.

Class Charts

I am delighted to announce our Class Charts winners of the week. In Reception Megan L gathered the most points while our top scorer this week in 1/2 was Piper. In Key Stage 2, Isla-Rose was the top scorer in 3/4, while Joel scored highest 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. Classes 1/2R and 5/6P had the highest attendance this week with 99.3%. The overall school attendance this year is 97.9% while this week it has 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

Friday 18 th December 2020	School closes for Christmas holidays
Christmas Holidays	
Monday 4 th 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