

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



January 8th 2021 Volume 16

Happy New Year

I would like to welcome all members of the school community back to learning following the Christmas break and to wish everyone all the best for 2021. I hope that you managed to get some benefit from your break over Christmas, even though circumstances were far from ideal. 2020 was a very challenging year and so far, 2021 has followed firmly in its footsteps. Let us all hope that the situation improves over the coming months and that we have some form of normality later in the spring.

Lockdown and Partial Closure

This week has been a very difficult week for all concerned and it started with worries over the return of children to school across the country and the potential consequences in terms of community infection. News of the potency of the new variant was alarming for everyone and our priority always has to be the safety of children, staff and families. It was a stressful situation for school leaders and when the Government eventually decided to lockdown and restrict the numbers of children coming into school, it could be argued that the decision could have been made earlier. We had, of course, planned and prepared for this scenario for many months and so we were able to put arrangements in place for partial opening very swiftly. I would like to thank Miss Bowden for her excellence and efficiency in processing so much at this very busy time.

Maintaining Learning, Maintaining Community

From the outset of the COVID crisis, I have been eager that we do our utmost to maintain learning and maintain our school community. We have learned a lot and trained and developed our capacity ready for what, in my opinion, was always a likely lockdown. The details of all Microsoft Teams accounts were shared in November, along with a user guide. When we had to close the Y3/4 bubble after half term, we were able to put our plans into place and also learned from that process. Access to virtual teaching is imperative for a number of reasons. Teacher input assists the children in their learning and also means that teachers can assess and adjust learning. Seeing the children joining in at home on the interactive whiteboard while key worker classmates join in simultaneously in school has been amazing. I know that the children in school have loved being able to see their classmates at home and vice versa, thus helping us to maintain a community spirit. It has taken a lot of work to get to this point and it is 9 months since I first started the process with Durham County Council. From time to time, people may find problems in accessing, that is often down to WiFi or issues with computers and it is something which happens to us all who are working in this way. I do think that the confidence of children and parents in using this method of learning will improve over time, especially now that everyone has located the aforementioned passwords. Thank you to Mrs Ozturk and Mrs Smart for assisting with passwords and I know that they were very busy. We will continue to look at further enhancing our provision but I would like to praise our wonderful team of staff as I believe that our virtual learning offer compares favourably with others, something which will ultimately benefit our fabulous children. Attendance and engagement has been high, we have arranged for families to have computers if needed and we really need all children to be taking part and completing work.

YouTube Learning Videos: Mrs Harvey

Mrs Harvey has also recorded some fantastic Geography, History and RE videos for children who are in Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. We asked Mrs Harvey to begin producing these in September and she has done a great job. These short videos are on our YouTube channel. Please check them out, I am sure that they will be useful. Teachers may also use some of them as an aide in their wider curriculum lessons.

Snow Woe

Just when we thought we had settled into a routine, the ice and snow that fell this morning threw another curveball into the mix. I always liaise closely with other Headteachers in this situation and thanks to the fact that we have a number of staff who live locally and our reduced numbers, we were able to open. I am also delighted that we managed to continue with our virtual teaching and this will be one benefit in the years to come if we face snow closures. Thank you to all of the staff for their bravery and commitment, which meant that we could maintain learning for all pupils today.

Prospective new starters

Our initial programme of virtual open meetings for prospective parents is 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 a significant number of prospective parents across County Durham who have not yet expressed their preferences and Friday 15th January, next Friday, is the deadline for submissions. 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.

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 if your child has been in school. 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, even if children are eligible to attend, 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.

Drop off and Pick up

We respectfully ask that only one parent accompanies the children to and collects the children from school. In addition, in the interests of minimising the risk of the spread of the virus, we ask that parents do not arrive early at school and that they leave as soon as they collect the children. While schools do not have jurisdiction over parents off site, the advice from Durham County Council is that parents may choose to wear a face covering or mask if they feel as though it is difficult to maintain social distancing at the school gate. **We do require visitors to the office to wear a mask at this time, just as they would be asked to wear one in a shop or garage.** Thank you for your continued co-operation and for working with us to slow the spread of the virus, something which is especially important at this point in time.

A Bowden

Miss A Bowden
Head of School

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher