

Ox Close Primary School Newsletter



Dedicated to Excellence

February 12th 2021 Volume 21

What a half term

This half term has been absolutely unique and has presented children, parents, school leaders, teaching assistants and teachers with a whole host of challenges. I am sure that nobody would claim that the circumstances have been ideal and huge skill, determination, effort and compromise have been required from all concerned. I believe that our arrangements and organisation have meant that we have been able to offer the most authentic possible education experience to the children. The feedback which we received from parents in our recent survey would indicate that the efforts of the school are really appreciated by families. I would like to thank everyone for helping to make the arrangements a success and I am aware that it has taken huge commitment from everyone. A special thank you has to go to Miss Bowden, who has been a tower of strength and has been at the heart of putting the most complex logistics into place, as well as being a terrific support with the avalanche of administrative tasks which have resulted from COVID.

Snow

On top of the complications of providing in school provision for over 60 children per day and remote teaching, the recent weather has been an additional problem this week. Spennymoor seems to have been relatively badly affected this year in comparison to other parts of the region, including further north where I live. This has presented problems for staff who live a distance away from travelling in and it has meant that we have had to rely upon locally based staff for in person teaching, with others at home but managing the live lessons. One positive by product of the COVID crisis has been that schools should have developed their remote learning capacity, meaning that lost days such as those experienced a couple of years ago, should be a thing of the past (as long as people remember their passwords)! That said, I do hope that the children have had the opportunity to go out and enjoy the snow as it has been 'proper snow' and some of my happiest memories as a parent have been in enjoying such times with my family. Thank you to all of the local staff for stepping in and helping us to continue running our in-school provision and thank you to parents for their understanding.

Half term - no homework

As next week is half term, we won't be setting homework or providing virtual teaching. We would encourage the children to have some time off and to take time away from being on a screen. Virtual learning will return on Monday 22nd February.

Connecting the Community: Solan Connor Fawcett Cancer Trust

On Wednesday, Mark Solan kindly joined us for 2 assemblies, where we shared news of our exciting new partnership and competition. After half term, we will produce a template and the children will be asked to design a logo which represents the values of kindness, friendship and love - values which both Ox Close and the Solan Trust seek to promote. We will select a winning design from each phase (Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6) and then this design will eventually be made into a piece of communal art work, such as a mosaic, for each phase. When they are completed, screen prints of each mosaic will be made and these will be produced on t-shirts and hoodies etc. The t-shirts and hoodies will be available to buy and then half of the money will go to school and half will go to the Trust. Mark plans to use the funds raised to buy equipment for a play room for the children who attend his shop, while I have asked the Children's Leadership Team to think of what they would like the school's share to be spent on - probably on some outdoor equipment for play and lunch time. Finally, each mosaic will then be gifted to a local charity or good cause and these will also be decided upon by the children.

Well-being support

The pandemic has brought the issue of Mental Health to the fore and it is great that it is becoming more widely spoken about, with stories in the news every day. There is no doubt that many children and adults across the country will have suffered with anxiety as a result of the pandemic and it is something which we have been keeping a close eye on from September. Miss Bewick, our PSA, has counselling

qualifications and is available to speak to, in confidence, if either you or your child need support or advice in this area. She also has a background in working for Families First so has a good knowledge of available support services. I know that she has arranged some support for families already and is very keen to help others.

Miss Bewick would also like me to share her email address with you so that you can contact her directly: r.bewick300@oxclosespennymoor.uk. Please feel free to get in touch with her about this or any other matters which she would normally assist.

Assemblies

Miss Bowden continued with her assemblies this week and they proved to be as popular as ever, with many award winners. She has done amazingly with this and she has even showed me how to organise them on Teams now too, which is no mean feat! The assemblies will continue in the week after half term.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2	Thursday at 2pm
Years 3. 4. 5 and 6	Friday at 9:30am

Your child will just need to log in in the usual way. On the Class Channel, a link will appear just before the assembly that will say 'Click to Join'.

Collection and Drop Off

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.

Controlling the spread of the virus

The Government decision to restrict school access to key workers and vulnerable children only was as part of the effort to control the spread of the virus. As has been the case since the outset, we have a number of measures in place in school to help mitigate against the spread but ultimately COVID-19 is a community virus. In order to help control the spread of the virus, we ask if key worker parents can continue to only send the children into school if it is essential to do so - i.e. there are no safe alternative arrangements at home. Thank you for your continued support with this.

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. **Please note that if your child has been in school and displays symptoms before 3.30pm on Sunday that you should still get in touch with the school via email.** Thank you.

A Bowden

Miss A Bowden
Head of School

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher