

Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Where to start… well, I guess it best to start with how great it was to see everybody on Monday and hear the children speak of their Christmas holidays! I guess for most of you, like me, this seems like a long time ago and the rest of the week has all been a bit of a blur! I will try to keep this newsletter as short as possible as you have had to digest so much lengthy communication from me over the last 7 days or so. For this half term the newsletter will have three sections. A top section for key messages for all parents and then sections only relevant to children in school or at home, learning remotely. This means you have the option to read about information that isn’t relevant to you directly, but also means that you don’t have to if you’d rather not.

What I would like to do first today is to give a broad overview of our approach to this whole thing here at Littletown and the overriding rationale behind it. This will hopefully allow you all to understand it fully.

We are running Year group bubbles of pupils identified as needing to be in school. This is because numbers are much larger than in the previous lockdown (as seems to be the case in all schools) where we used family groupings to make bubbles. We were running Nursery and Reception together where the numbers were smaller, but due an increase in these numbers and a late change in Government guidance, we will be opening the Nursery fully to those who have chosen to attend from Monday. This model allows the following:

* capacity for larger numbers of children in school than last lockdown
* children in school remain with their peers and their teachers
* teachers are teaching from 1 year group padlet rather than many and this in turn creates a greater match for the remote learning for each year group
* capacity is created for teachers and teaching assistants to sufficiently support remote learning for children at home by responding to emails, hosting google meets, monitoring google classroom and tapestry etc as well as planning the padlet content for the following week
* year group bubbles operate in the same way under the same risk assessment as classes were prior to lockdown without requiring a rewriting of a whole school risk assessment

I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the Littletown staff for their incredible adaptability, effort and attitude this week. Many schools closed entirely for some days this week and some are still sorting their provision. I was pleased that we were open for many key workers on Tuesday (13 hours after the Prime Minister’s announcement) and that remote learning padlets were up and running for families at 10:30am. As we end the week, I feel very proud of where we are at as a school under the current circumstances. It feels like I have had a phone or email conversation with nearly all of you over the last 7 days or so and I would like to thank all of you for your patience, understanding and support during this challenging time. One way or another, together, we will all get through these next weeks of disruption. As ever, please don’t hesitate to contact me head@littletown.devon.sch.uk if you have any questions about anything. I wish you all a calm and restful weekend!

Yours faithfully,

David Perkins 

Principal

**In school bits**

As has become commonplace in the last year or so, I have been amazed at how brilliantly the children have coped with the staggering amount of change that has happened to them with no notice this week. I also want to thank parents of children in school for all the emails and phone calls that we have been having with nearly all of you. The very fact that you do key work means that sorting all this out really must have been a headache you didn’t need. Thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding.

**Uniform**

Children in school will remain in uniform as the provision is closer to usual school structure.

**Lunch**

Our kitchen is remaining open cooking hot meals for free school meal children on site and non free school meal children whose parents book them as usual via parent pay by the end of Friday. Unfortunately, we are not receiving the free milk or fruit during lockdown so please ensure your child has a healthy snack for break time

**Breakfast and after school club**

Breakfast and After school clubs are running. After school club finishes at 5:15pm and is not running at all on Friday. This has been based on demand and viability.

**Grand parents**

We have been surprised to observe the number of key worker children who appear to be being dropped off or picked up by non-working grandparents. If your child is in school, but you are able to have grandparents look after the children, then the government expects you to do so. This ensures that school places remain on offer to families who really require them. Please contact me if you no longer require a place because of this. I would also make parents aware that using grandparents to drop off and pick up children from key worker groups does significantly increase their risk. Key worker groups are made up of a range of children, many with parents who are working in environments where covid exposure is a regular risk. If you wish to discuss this at all with me please do get in touch.

**Working hours**

I know shift times change regularly and sometimes at very short notice, but If I could ask one favour? Please could you email admin at the beginning of the week, with the times that you could drop off and collect your child if they are different to that of the normal school day. For example, if your shift finishes at 1:30, you do not need to wait until 3:15 to collect your child. Collecting them at the earlier time will help to keep our numbers a little smaller and make school feel a bit safer. I want to continue to operate the school on a basis of trust, so won’t ask to see proof of time sheets and contracts etc like lots of schools are doing, but if you can work with us on this it will really help.

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**At home bits**

A huge thank you to all of you who have once again embarked on the homeschooling journey, probably with a certain amount of intrepidation. Please use us to support you in any way we can. Last night, ‘clap for carers’ was quite rightly dedicated to all of you for the crucial role you are now playing yet again in the fight against Covid-19.

It has been lovely seeing first hand and hearing how successful google meets have been for classes and year groups this week. These will now happen regularly with staff for the rest of the half term. These are a great way of children keeping contact with their peers and hearing directly from their teachers. I would like to thank parents of children at home for their patience in awaiting login details and support with tech issues and for the numerous positive emails about the quality and depth of the remote learning and approach. I have been sharing these with staff and in what has been a very tough week, they have made a big difference, thank you. Hopefully, next week will be quieter! This will allow me to spend more time in google classrooms, google meets and tapestry streams looking at and celebrating the children’s learning.

**Live lessons**

We will not be doing live lessons and only recording our own demo videos etc when really necessary. The reason for this decision is that the National Oak Academy has already done this recording of lessons to a high quality and we would be spending a lot of time and effort duplicating something already done. Instead, by using the Oak Academy wherever possible, staff supporting remote learning can direct all of this allocated time and energy into actually supporting, engaging with and facilitating the children’s learning.

**Timetables**

We also won’t be issuing timetables for parents. Although we may suggest a loose structure, we are aware that a timetable can just add to the feeling of anxiety and pressure for parents. Also, many of you have multiple children sharing devices so will find it impossible to follow timetables. Parents are therefore able to structure the learning however they think best. Coming up with a rough structure or timetable for your children though, will help them over the next few weeks. Please get in touch if you want any support with this.

**Remote learning links on website**

Links to the padlets and lots of helpful links and information are now on a remote learning tab on our school website. The new padlet links will be put here on Monday mornings. This means children can access them independently. KS2 teachers will also put the padlet link in the stream of each google classroom on Monday morning. We will still email them to parents too. I know in last lockdown we tried to do this wherever possible on a Friday afternoon, but with the increased quality of the padlets and the juggling of classroom teaching alongside supporting remote learning, teachers in many cases will have no choice but to work on these over their weekend. Thank you for your understanding on this.

**Google classroom**

Our partners at Computeam have made this helpful suite of videos for those of our using google classroom with your children for the first time. It does take a little getting used to, but it is a brilliant way for children to receive and submit learning, so please do persevere with it and email me or the year remote learning email address if you are having issues. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/parenthowtoguides>

**Xbox and playstation**

It is easy to use google classroom and open padlet pages and watch the lesson videos on your tv via an xbox or playstation if you have them. This could be a game changer for families sharing devices. This link here shows you how to do this easily on either device:

<https://franklin2017.s3.amazonaws.com/6/ckeditor/Access_Google_Classroom_with_PS4_and_Xbox_p2sCytqjNo.docx%20%282%29>

**Hotspots and data**

Remote learning is a real challenge for those of you without wifi and some of the videos etc can eat through phone data. The Government’s plan for this is to allow me on your behalf to register for free data on your phone so you can use your phone as a hotspot to generate wifi. Here is a link to a helpful guide on how to use your phone as a hotspot. Please contact me if you need me to fill in the form to get you free data if you are a customer of EE, O2, Sky Mobile, SMARTY, Tesco mobile, Three or Virgin mobile.

<https://uk.pcmag.com/mobile-phones/41270/how-to-turn-your-phone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot>

**Free school meals voucher scheme**

The Government has still not announced details of the national voucher scheme, but we have been told it is coming. As soon as we know more I will let parents know. I can only apologise for this.