

Dear Parents and Carers,

So here we are at the end of the first week of lockdown - I expect your heads are spinning, trying to absorb all the new information about so many aspects of life now!

We do have lots to say today, hopefully all helpful information for your

Admission to the Infant and Junior School for September 2021

In all the "busy-ness" of this new lockdown, please don't forget that the closing date for admission to school in September 2021 is next week – 15th January! This is to join the Infant school or move to our Junior School. Please remind any friends or family anywhere in the country, as these dates are national for England now.

Has your financial situation changed?

I realise that lots of people are facing temporary or permanent changes to their work at the moment and that this will have an impact, short or long term, on family finances. If you think you might be eligible for free school meals now, then do contact the office so we can process a check. This will be done entirely confidentially. This will have two benefits for your child.

1. You will receive food vouchers to replace the meal your child would have been receiving in school – for infant or junior children. You will receive this until school returns or your financial situation improves. Following recent campaigns, families received vouchers for the holidays too.
2. There is a long-term grant (called Pupil Premium) that is then given to schools to support your child's learning in school.

Frequently asked questions now we are in lockdown again.

Thank you for all your questions this week. We've tried to answer as many as possible below today - we will keep in touch to add to this information in the coming days and weeks.

We will continue to send out a joint newsletter for the two schools as so much information is relevant to everyone; however, you might also receive individual school updates too. There might well be different approaches for some aspects of the remote learning, due to the age of our children. For example, you only need to know about the details of the learning platforms for your child's school (Infants – Purple Mash, Juniors – Google Classroom).

Remote Learning - How does it work?

We've had lots of questions about remote learning, which is completely understandable, as the system is different for this lockdown. We understand if you have worries or questions right now. Even though we had [this policy](#) written last year, putting it into place feels different – we are all learning what actually works best together. Please reassure your children too, as we can sense a few seem concerned - we know they want to do their best! Keeping children motivated with praise, love, hugs and cuddles is key to making this a success!

We need to offer a system that is as fair and as accessible as possible which is why we have a blended approach. We know that some families have limited access to devices. We know parents are working at home. We know some of our families have 2 or 3 or more children to support. We aim to offer different styles of learning to cover as many situations as possible – there isn't one approach that will suit all families, just as in school we don't use one approach for every lesson.

Ideally, it would be best to work on the normal school days as that's when the staff will be checking how your child is doing. However, we realise everyone has a different situation – a couple of parents have wondered about spreading the school work or doing more of it at the weekend, when they aren't working themselves – this is fine too! The important thing is to do what works for your family so your child can continue with their learning in a way that is sustainable and keeps everyone in the family happy and calm.

We will keep our approach under review – this is the first few days of lockdown which requires schools and parents to work in this way. However, our key vision is that our system is accessible to all our families, so we won't rely on one way of doing things.

What's the work for next week and where can I find it?

Last time, we published next week's work for you on Friday so you could look over it at the weekend. We will do that for future weeks. We are aiming to have most of it done today – please bear with us, as it's been quite busy in school this week, sorting out all the new thing again.

- Infants – on the website. Teachers intend to embed hyperlinks to the pre-recorded lessons into those plans, so please check the website again on Monday, as we are still making them.
- Juniors - on google classroom

What about reading books?

At present we are unable to send reading books home or provide an opportunity for books to be changed. Whilst we appreciate that online books are not the same as physically holding a real book, we can direct you to lots of good online alternatives.

Both the Infant and Junior Schools have an online subscription to the **Big Cat e-books**. Please refer to the school website for the Big Cat Collins login details. These are available for all book bands from Pink through to Lime (Book Band 11).

It is important to read every day, both reading and listening to stories and to read widely for pleasure.

Oxford Owls also has an online e-book library, and books can be search for according to colour band (Lilac through to Band 15).

Reading Eggs is offering free online resources - this has been recommended as a good resource for home.

Are the Zoom sessions compulsory?

The simple answer is no. We realise that the times might not suit your family on some days or that things come up. In a recent Headteacher meeting, one person's child and dog were sick at the same time, so he had to leave suddenly! The sessions will be at different times in different weeks (depending when the teachers are with the children in school - you will receive information for your child's class teacher), so hopefully that will help.

We would strongly encourage children to join as many sessions as possible. We believe these will help connect our children during this lockdown - we believe this will support our children's emotional well-being now they can't come to school every day. We have trained our staff now, so we have good safeguarding measures in place to protect everyone online during these sessions. In school, we will review how these sessions are going. We will be able to tailor them to the children's needs, which will look different for the different ages. We will be able to encourage or remind if parents report remote learning issues to us. We want there to be lots of waves and smiles, so it's a happy time of the day for your children!

What do we need to remember on Zoom? – see policy for details

- Timings – whilst we aim to stick to the timings, please appreciate that things can be a little delayed for a number of reasons, some of which are not within our control. We will continue to review how this is going.
- Children must have their videos on.
- Please change to your child's name so we know who is joining.
- Parents – these sessions are for the children only. No parent should be on the screen. If you have any questions, just email in, thank you!
- If we have connectivity issues, we apologise! The meeting might have to end if the connection is too poor and we'd try again the next day.

Pre-recorded videos - what will these be like?

These will be relatively short (because we know about IT family access issues), to be used as prompts to start learning, to address key misconceptions, to tell stories or simply to have fun! Recorded videos will allow your child to pause or re-watch the teacher, going at their own pace to support their learning. Sometimes these will be by Polehampton staff (across your child's year group); sometimes they will be from other quality sources such as White Rose or Oak Academy.

Can the school provide any devices to support learning at home?

We realise that some families now have more than one child would ideally be online at the same time, with a working parent too. You may have seen in the press that schools are being given devices to give to families – on the official laptop system, our allocation is currently zero and primaries can't apply at the moment! We are challenging that, but similar schools to ours have only received between 1-3 devices. This would only be for the Junior School – infants are not included in this scheme at all.

It is worth noting that our remote learning platforms can be accessed via Xbox and PlayStation consoles which may ease the situation. particularly for those families with multiple siblings and parents working from home needing to access devices. There are a number of YouTube tutorials to show how. You can plug in a keyboard and/or mouse if that would be helpful.

We are reviewing whether we can lend school devices to families. Currently they are enrolled to our school system, so can't be used at home. We have asked our IT providers to explore this issue and get back to us with an answer.

We have been made aware of **two local organisations that can support families with devices** which would be a good long-term solution as you are able to keep them. Do contact them directly – both have reached out to schools to say for this to be shared with our parent community. Do you know of any other organisations that might be able to help? Please let us know if you do.

The Lions Club

Fleet Lions have teamed up with other Lions Clubs in the area and are now refurbishing PCs and laptops and donating them with preinstalled Microsoft software to local non-profit organisations, charities, preschools and families in need. Since the pandemic we've supplied lots of machines to help local schoolchildren with their home learning. Each PC is loaded with an official copy of Windows 10 Pro and a range of free software, including Libre Office'.

Contact it@fleetlions.org.uk <https://www.fleetlions.org.uk/community/recycledcomputers.html>

First Days

At First Days we believe all children deserve the same start in life.

We provide everyday essentials to families who need them by distributing school uniforms, new baby essentials, travel items, toiletries, safety equipment, furniture, toys and books.

<https://www.firstdays.net/>

Do you have **any spare technology at home that you would be willing to donate** or do you know a company that might have devices or equipment? If you do, can you give us as much information about the spec of the device and we will ask our IT support for advice. We have registered with the charity <https://www.business2schools.com/donate> so we hope to find support from them too.

How do we access the School Nursing Team now?

*The school nursing advice line has a new number! Call us on **0300 365 0010***

Your School Nursing service is aware that the Coronavirus pandemic continues to be a difficult and worrying time for everyone and during this time there have been additional pressures on children, families and young people. We are here to help with advice and support regarding physical or emotional concerns.

The School Nursing advice line is available to support children, young people and their families who live in West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell; it is an easy way to reach us, is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm and can give you the advice and support you need.

Critical workers/vulnerables

We realise that critical working parents need places to enable them to do their jobs. However, listening to the news, the situation is dire at the moment. **If there is someone at home, so your child could be supervised then please do consider keeping your child at home.** As a country, we are trying to reduce transmission rates, so any opportunity to have less people meeting is good. If you make this decision, even for a short period, we are happy to hold your place as a critical worker. We all want transmission rates to be reduced overall.

Please be aware that, if we have staff shortages (for example, staff needing to self-isolate), we might need to close your child's bubble, as we cannot swap staff across to different groups.

Attachments

- Both schools – menu for Critical workers/vulnerable chn group from Monday 11th Jan
- Infant School – 4 Parent how to guides for Purple Mash

We hope you have a safe, peaceful weekend. It's going to continue to be very cold, so wrap up well for your walks.

best wishes

Miss Ball, Mrs Castell, Mrs Scott and Mrs Medcalf