



St Joseph's Covid Update 3 8/1/21

Home Learning

First of all a massive thanks and well done to children and parents for the level of engagement with remote learning. We found with the last lockdown that the children who got into the habit of learning at home early on in lockdown were able to maintain their learning throughout that long period. They were also the children who had the fewest gaps in their learning when we assessed them in September. There are very few children who have not engaged well this week. We will be contacting them to see what the barrier is as it is so important not to lose these learning opportunities. We were very pleased to be able to loan out a number of chromebooks to families to make it easier for them to get on with online learning. We still have capacity to loan out more if any children are having to share a device or are working from difficult to use devices. We do see all activity that the chromebooks are used for so please do limit their use to learning activities. We discovered this week that you can access Google Classroom through Xbox and Playstation so if you want to put that Christmas gaming chair to really good use you could try learning on your gaming machine. I believe that accessing Google Classroom is relatively easy but it can be quite clunky to use when on there so chromebooks are still a better option.

Next week we are starting live Read Write Inc lessons for some groups of children which I am sure will be a revelation to any parents watching in.

What we are not sure of is how families are managing extra data use if that is an issue for how they are accessing the internet. The Dept for Education have arranged, with some suppliers, the right to extend data allowances free of charge for children who need to access learning at home. The application to extend data must come from a school. Mrs Putnam is managing this project. She says:

Dear Parents,

The Department of Education currently has a pilot offer to increase mobile data allowances for children and young people to help with their online home learning during lockdown.

It is available to families who don't have access to a fixed broadband connection and/or can't afford the additional data needed to access educational resources or social care services. It is only available for children and young people who have been advised not to attend school.

The networks that are participating in this scheme are: EE, Sky Mobile (only if you are on a pay monthly contract), Smarty, Tesco (only if you are on a pay monthly contract) Three, Virgin (only if you are on a pay monthly contract) and O2.

If this is something you are interested in, please contact me by Friday 15th January.

Susy Putnam
PSA

Please contact Susy at putnams@st-josephs.plymouth.sch.uk by 15th Jan if you think you could benefit from this offer. We also have a number of SIM cards allowing 30gb of data over 90 days. I understand that the SIM cards can be put into any phone (and some tablets) and can then act as a hotspot for other devices to access the data. If you feel being able to use one of these would make accessing home learning easier for your child please contact Miss Hawken hawkenk@st-josephs.plymouth.sch.uk to arrange to collect a SIM card.

Free School Meals

There has been great frustration nationally at the delay in finalising arrangements for Free School Meals during this lockdown. I apologise to families who have gone without this week after the huge effort it took to ensure families had access to food during the two Christmas weeks. We are now in the position to start providing weekly food parcels to families again. Parcels will be available to collect from school on Monday at the following times for each class. You will need to use the main Chapel St entrance to collect your parcel.

Foundation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
12:30	12:35	12:40	12:45	12:50	12:55	13:00

Please bring a strong container to carry the parcel home as they do tend to be quite heavy.

This is only for families who are registered as being eligible for Free School Meals ,not all families who do not pay for a meal in school just because their child is in Classes 2, 1 or Foundation. If you are unsure if you are eligible please phone Miss Hawken 01752563185 to check. If you think you should be eligible now due to changed circumstances contact Susy Putnam and she will tell you how to apply.

In the first lockdown some families did not make use of their food parcel. To save wasting food, if you are eligible for Free School Meals but do not want a food parcel to be made up for you please text the school mobile 07422938855 by 9:00 on Monday morning. Equally if there are particular dietary requirements that you think we might not be aware of please text that information to the same number.

School Attendance

With the short notice we were given about the lockdown one of the most challenging tasks was arranging which children could come into school. We have many more children of critical

workers who have requested school places this time compared to last. We also have a number of children who are vulnerable in some way who we have invited in. Given that, with social distancing, we can only fit 8 or 9 children in classrooms we are at, or very near, capacity in all classrooms each day next week. If you are a critical worker we will do our best to accommodate your child but it may be that we have to say no to children because we cannot exceed our safe capacity. To enable all critical workers to be able to access a school place when they need it please only take up your place if there is no alternative way of looking after your child. If a school place is used as childcare when a child could be cared for at home you may be denying somebody who really needs that space so that they can carry out their critical work. Although we put in place all the safety measures that we can, any time out of the home increases the risk of the virus being spread so the safest thing to do is to Stay Home.

Children who have been given places for next week have been informed today (Friday 8th). Please let Miss Hawken know your requirements for the following week as soon as you can. If you have been allocated a place but no longer require it please let Miss Hawken know because there may be somebody else desperate for that place. Please do not send your child to school without having booked a place. We cannot exceed our safe capacity.

Communication

We have updated our email list from our data management system so hopefully the parents who were not getting the bulk emails have got this one. If you are reading this from the website because you did not get an email please check your junk or spam folder. If it is still not there or you have changed your email address please contact Miss Hawken.

Once again thanks for your support and understanding during this most challenging of times. Many parents have expressed their gratitude to me. When you are being pushed to your limits those little moments of thanks do make a difference. It has been a week of huge upheaval for all of the staff at St Joseph's and they deserve all the thanks they can get from you and from me.

Best wishes

BJ Gill