



12th January 2021

BHPS Newsletter No.18 2020~2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

If there is one thing that I have learnt over the past year, it is that I should never be surprised by anything. As many of you will already know, we have had to close school today and tomorrow due to a boiler failure. I have led four schools over the last 16 years and this is the first time this has happened ... right in the middle of a national lockdown! I am so sorry that we have had to take this action today but, with temperatures in classrooms at 13 deg, we had no choice. I apologise for any inconvenience caused to families and want you to know that we are doing all we can to keep our school open.

We are hoping that the part required to fix the boiler should become available to our contractor tomorrow and that we should be able to open to critical worker children again on Thursday. This is not certain though and we will be in touch tomorrow to confirm what is happening. In the meantime, all children should engage with remote learning on Wednesday.

Critical Worker Places

The national picture of increased demand for critical worker places is also reflected at BHPS. Meeting demand for places is an on-going challenge for us in school. Of course, if group sizes in school are large, we are not benefitting from the lockdown and children and staff continue to be at the same level of risk. The guidance for how to manage the current lockdown in schools came out two days after it started.

Guidance states that *children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.*

It does appear that, whilst entitled to a place, some families are not complying with the final part of the above sentence. It is hard to make generalisations about every particular situation and I do not intend to. We just ask that families operate within the **spirit of the lockdown** when deciding whether they really require a critical worker place at school.

We should also point out that we can't accommodate last-minute requests for places in school. Instead, we will need to operate with the responses to the original survey unless there are exceptional circumstances, as staffing levels have been determined. (We fully understand that, in a small number of cases, parents have had to alter their shift patterns because of the current heating closure). The previous survey is in place up to and including Friday 22nd January. A survey will be issued next week for parents to identify the days they require for the remainder of this half term.

Swimming

I can now confirm that swimming for year 4 will not be taking place in the foreseeable future.

Safety Online Advice from the NSPCC

As with the first lockdown, it is possible that children are spending more time online at the moment. The NSPCC have produced some useful guidance regarding how to ensure that children are as safe as possible. This can be accessed [here](#).

Remote Learning

Our blended learning plan, which can be viewed on our website in the 'Coronavirus Updates' section, swung into action last week and I would like to clarify and amend one or two points for you.

Firstly, can I thank parents who are supporting their children with remote learning and say that the BHPS staff team fully understand how difficult this is. Well done to you all and, if you are finding it hard, we are here to help.

Secondly, I'd like to also state that if you think that switching to organising remote learning is easy for staff, you are mistaken. I applaud the staff team for their fantastic efforts at such a difficult time.

Moving forward, I would like to make the following points:

- We appreciate that it helps some parents to be able to see what is going to be covered during the next day in advance. The blended learning plan says that detail of the next day's work will be posted at 3.00pm. This is not giving staff enough time to respond to the successes or misconceptions experienced by children and so this work will now be on the website by 5.00pm
- With regard to the setting of work for a Monday, we will now ensure that all year groups have details of their Monday's activities published by 5.00pm on a Sunday at the latest. Due to staffing arrangements, some year groups work in different ways and so some work may be posted well before this but the 5.00pm Sunday deadline should be in place for all year groups.
- We are receiving very positive feedback about how useful the morning MS Teams meetings are. There are some technical problems being experienced by some families, but not all. Patience is required here. We believe that some difficulties experienced when teachers are sharing screens can be improved if families download the MS Teams App. This may prevent the black screen that some of you are seeing.
- Please emphasise to your child that they should not be using the chat facility unless asked to by the teacher.
- Morning MS Teams meetings are scheduled every half hour in school. In order to prevent connectivity problems caused by meetings overlapping, we are finding that it helps if we end the meetings slightly earlier. Foundation meetings will be shorter because of the children's difficulty to concentrate for longer periods of time.
- We will try to provide parents with an indication about how long some activities might take and about the rhythm of a normal school day (i.e. when children might have down time or physical breaks).

As a staff team, we are determined to make the remote learning as purposeful as possible and have been taking note of the latest research carried out by the EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) and OfSTED. It is interesting that the OfSTED research makes reference to some myths about remote education. It states that it is a myth that the best way to deliver remote education is through live lessons. It also states that **building on prior learning, clarity of explanation, modelling** and opportunities for **practice** are more important. Research also shows how difficult it is for children to concentrate if they are looking at a screen for too long.

At the moment, at BHPS, we are very positive about the use of short recorded teaching videos. Although no single method should be used too much, the advantages of teaching videos include:

- They can be accessed by a family at any time, according to their needs
- They can be paused
- They can be watched several times if a child is unsure about an explanation
- There can be voice-overs of a useful graphic, pictorial representation or slide show
- They are not completely dependent on a stable internet connection
- We can record our own so that children see their own teacher or hear their own teacher's voice
- We can also use specialist videos from BBC or Oak Academy
- Teachers can concentrate solely on the explanation, not managing a class remotely
- Learning can be 'chunked'. A teaching video can ask a child to do an activity, press pause and then restart the video after 20 minutes of activity away from the screen. A 10-minute video could result in an hour's worth of activity whereas children will struggle to use a screen for an hour if watching a live lesson.

I do hope this information is useful to you all as we negotiate our way through the hardest of times. Please contact us if you have any questions and we will continue to provide as much support as possible.

Yours faithfully,



Pete Taylor
Head Teacher