



NEWSLETTER

We are growing together on our journey of achievement with Jesus in our hearts, heads and hands.

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11th January 2021

Wow! What a week! It is hard to believe that just one school week has passed since we were due to return to school – it all seems such a long time ago already. However, even though last week did not resemble any of our normal expectations, I do hope that you were all able to enjoy a restful Christmas and New Year Holiday with your immediate family. I wish you all best wishes for the coming year – even if it has not had a very auspicious start!

As you are aware all the teachers have been busy preparing for the return of the children on Tuesday. We were very much looking forward to seeing them all only to have the rug pulled from under our feet by the Prime Minister's announcement at 8pm. As previously stated, we did not have any prior knowledge of this announcement and I must thank you all for your patience with us following the very late announcement that school would only be open only for critical keyworker children on Tuesday.

All staff were in school on Tuesday changing their plans and move to remote learning. Since September we have been very aware that this might be necessary and have been planning for this eventuality. What we did not expect was for us to have to put these plans in place at such short notice. I must thank all the teachers who worked really hard to ensure that they could start the live MSTEAMS sessions on Wednesday morning.

All teachers and teaching assistants have been on site all this week to provide for both the Critical Key Worker children and those children at home. I am very grateful to all of them for their continued dedication and commitment to all the children and the school.

School Drop off and Collection Times:

School drop off at 8.30am

School Collection at 2.45pm

Footsteps Nursery 9am – 3pm

We ask all parents to be on time for school. As all parents are dropping off at the same time, we need to have a quick drop off process.

- The inner school gates will open from 8.20am.
- Parents are still not permitted to enter past the inner school gates.
- The children can enter independently once the school gate is open and they will be supervised in their bubble playground area.
- Parents of all children to kiss and drop their child at the inner school gate. Parents then to continue the loop to the second gate which is the designated EXIT gate.
- The inner side gate (parallel to Gipsy Lane) will also be open. However, the gate which opens to Gipsy Lane will be shut (parent should drop off their child at the main entrance).
- Only if necessary, should parents go near the inner school gates to talk to staff or to drop off their child. Please encourage independence.
- A member of staff will be situated at both gates.

Collection will be from the usual gates. The single side gate onto Gipsy Lane will be open in the afternoon for collection.

School Office: The school office hours will change during the Lockdown. **The office will be open from 8.30am – 2.30pm.** As prior to Lockdown, if possible, use email, telephone or the black mailbox on school fence rather than coming into the school office.

Key Worker Places: The new variant of the Covid 19 virus has had a dramatic impact on the number of cases and the infection rate continues to rise across the borough.

“the new variant of the virus being between 50 – 70% more transmittable with figures being 40% higher now than they were in April...Schools are vectors of transmission causing the virus to spread between households.” **Government Statement 5th Jan 2021**

As the numbers grow, it becomes more difficult to keep both children and staff safe. As in June when some groups returned to school, we are restricting year group numbers to 15 as outlined in our COVID 19 risk assessment.

On Tuesday, we welcomed all children whose parents felt that they were critical keyworkers or parents of vulnerable children. We followed this invite with a deadline for consideration on Wednesday 6th at 12pm.

To ensure everyone's safety, an increase beyond the numbers already in school would put our staff and the children on site at a higher risk.

In addition, the class teachers now have two responsibilities – ensuring learning for both the children at home and the children at school. Any increase on these numbers would have a huge detrimental impact on the staff's ability to provide high quality education for both those children in school and for those who remain at home.

Remote Learning takes a lot more time to plan, prepare and create lessons that will facilitate pupil understanding. Then once the lessons have been delivered/posted the teachers have then to give effective feedback as well as monitoring each child's progress.

Whilst we fully understand that many of you qualify for these places under the extremely wide-ranging Government guidelines, please understand that for safety, the school may not have the capacity. So please keep your children at home if it is at all possible for you to do so. This remains the safest option for the children and your families as well as our staff and their families.

The more children there are in school, the higher the risk for everyone.

Sending your child to school should only be used by parents who have **no other option**.

Remote Learning: Information regards the school's remote learning offer went home last week. Even though we have been upskilling on MSTEAMS – there is a big difference between learning the theory and then actually putting it in practice.

Our teachers are very keen to try out different approaches. Some of these may not be successful but the successful approaches will be integrated into the class's remote learning offer. Please understand if there are glitches. Our teachers have already related

with humour how they have made some silly mistakes...

All teachers meet twice a week (MSTEAMS) to share good practice and to review own practice. Please understand that there will be differences between each class's live sessions. The age of the children and Wi-Fi signal will impact on the provision the class teachers are able to offer.

Over the coming weeks, and as long as the number of children coming into school remains manageable, I am sure that our and the children's use of the features of MSTEAMS will continue to improve.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents for their kind remarks – they have kept us going through some of our darker moments.

Teacher Feedback on Remote Learning: To ensure work life balance for our teachers during this stressful time, please do not expect a reply to your emails outside of the school hours (9am – 2pm, Monday to Friday). The teachers will try to respond as soon as possible and we ask that you give the teachers two days to reply before sending a reminder.

Technology: You may be aware that the government promise of technological support has not been released to primary schools. St. Josephs has a very limited stock of reconditioned school devices to loan. If you would like to be considered for one of these devices, please inform your class teacher the reason for your request.

The school has also obtained twenty 30G data cards from Vodafone – so if you feel that your child's education would benefit from these data cards, please let your class teacher know.

Online Safety: Online safety leaflets have been emailed home and are also found on our COVID section on our school website (Information tab – Policies). If you wish to find out more about ESAFETY, please also look at the ESAFETY section on our school website.

Please note, the live lessons are only for the children. Parents should not be visible on the screen. We also ask that you apply 'background' filters when your child is using MSTEAMS.

MSTEAMS has been chosen due to its safety so we must ensure that 'human error' does not infringe this safety.

As your child will spend a lot of time online, please check that your parental controls provide adequate protection.

Just do your best: In the meantime, I am sure that some of you may be feeling overwhelmed or exhausted with the demands of lockdown, of trying to work from home and to support your children with their schoolwork.

However, here are a few things to bear in mind...

The first and most important outcome of this situation is that we all survive this pandemic - physically and mentally!

Remote Learning is there to support you and your children to learn at home whilst we get this virus under control. If they do not complete every task or find that your child is not enjoying a particular task, or the timetable does not fit with your work / home learning schedule then please do not stress and contact your class teacher.

Remember exercise and physical activity is important so please plan outdoor family time. This is about balance and surviving! We are all on a steep learning curve at the moment. Be kind to yourselves and be kind to each other.

Even during the darkest moments of this pandemic, it is important to remember that we are a community that offers love, respect and support to each other.

Please remember, as always, that we are here in school to help you if we possibly can. Please e-mail secretary@stjosephsbracknell.co.uk if you need help or if you feel other members of our community might benefit from some help from us.

Stay home and stay safe. God Bless.

Mrs. J. Dunlop, Headteacher

Reflection: I would like to leave you with the Wisdom of Pope Francis:

"You can have flaws, be anxious, and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world. Only you can stop it from going bust. Many appreciate you, admire you and love you.

Remember that to be happy is not to have a sky without a storm, a road without accidents, work without fatigue, relationships without disappointments.

To be happy is to find strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, security in the stage of fear, love in discord. It is not only to enjoy the smile, but also to reflect on the sadness. It is not only to celebrate the successes, but to learn lessons from the failures. It is not only to feel happy with the applause, but to be happy in anonymity.

Being happy is not a fatality of destiny, but an achievement for those who can travel within themselves.

To be happy is to stop feeling like a victim and become your destiny's author. It is to cross deserts, yet to be able to find an oasis in the depths of our soul.

It is to thank God for every morning, for the miracle of life.

Being happy is not being afraid of your own feelings. It's to be able to talk about you. It is having the courage to hear a "no". It is confidence in the face of criticism, even when unjustified. It is to kiss your children, pamper your parents, to live poetic moments with friends, even when they hurt us.

To be happy is to let live the creature that lives in each of us, free, joyful and simple. It is to have maturity to be able to say: "I made mistakes". It is to have the courage to say, "I am sorry". It is to have the sensitivity to say, "I need you". It is to have the ability to say, "I love you".

May your life become a garden of opportunities for happiness ... That in spring may it be a lover of joy. In winter a lover of wisdom.

And when you make a mistake, start all over again. For only then will you be in love with life.

You will find that to be happy is not to have a perfect life. But use the tears to irrigate tolerance. Use your losses to train patience. Use your mistakes to sculptor serenity. Use pain to plaster pleasure. Use obstacles to open windows of intelligence.

Never give up Never give up on people who love you. Never give up on happiness, for life is an incredible show. Happy new year!"