



# Weekly Newsletter

8 January 2021

*Making learning a lifelong adventure*

Our school value for this half-term is kindness

Dear Parents/Carers

Happy New Year! The new national lockdown has, of course, meant that we have not seen everyone face-to-face at the start of term, as we would have hoped. Memories of Christmas are, for most of us, quite a distant memory already! However, I do hope all of our families were able to enjoy a restful holiday and to benefit from some quality family time.

The start of term has been very challenging for school staff, children and families alike and I would like to thank everyone for their cooperation and commitment. We are in this together and all of us want to help keep each other safe and to minimise the impact on our children's education and development.

I have been really heartened by the High Beeches staff team who have really worked their socks off to produce remote learning this week with only a few hours' notice and I am sure parents will agree that it is far more tailored and challenging to the children's needs than was the case in the first lockdown and school closure last year. By lunchtime today there had been almost 7,000 posts and well over 11,000 comments and likes on the platform!

Our main platform for remote learning is *Seesaw*. This is used in Years 1 to 6 and follows on nicely from *Tapestry*, which is used in Reception to produce an ongoing learning journal and assessment profile of pupils during the Early Years Foundation Stage and also allows for interaction with parents and pupils at home. Although we have spent some time developing the use of *Seesaw* since the last lockdown and school closure, we do so in a reflective way and expect to improve and develop our practice throughout the coming weeks. We have received a lot of feedback from parents already and have been able to make some adjustments to how things are organised, and I plan to meet with parent reps next week to seek further feedback and to update them on developments.

The lockdown and school closure means that both pupils and staff should stay at home as much as possible and the numbers in school should be kept small to avoid transmission of Coronavirus. Although the school is required to close for the vast majority of pupils, we are also required to remain open for a small group of key worker and vulnerable children. Running both the face-to-face and remote learning operations is a huge and complex exercise and requires a real team effort. School staff are working in school with the key worker/vulnerable children alternating with home working on a weekly basis. This means that the staff not in school are undertaking a greater share of the management of remote learning and some online lessons may be delivered by teachers from your child's adjoining class. The same is true of teaching assistants who are also alternating between supporting remote learning from home and working in school.

The short notice given for the switch to remote learning meant that, initially, we were only able to schedule activities to appear on *Seesaw* at 9am each morning. However, we recognise that having the work on the previous evening is helpful to parents who may want to look through it the night before, so that they can plan how they juggle this with work or other commitments, and we now expect all activities to appear on *Seesaw* the evening beforehand, where possible. Lastly, please accept my apologies for any confusion about responding to work submitted online. It is not the case that work submitted after 3pm will not get marked, rather that it may not be seen that day and before the next pieces of work are set. This is because teachers are spending a great deal of their afternoons/evenings uploading and preparing lessons and activities for the next day once school finishes and may not be able to spend much time looking at pupil posts after this point.

Yours faithfully

*Jonathan Walker* Headteacher

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## Message from the Governing Body

On behalf of the governors, I would like to say a very big thank you to all of the staff, teachers and teaching assistants of High Beeches, for rising to the challenge that was set on Monday evening. We really appreciate all the hard work and dedication that goes on behind the scenes.

We would also like to take a moment to thank **YOU** our wonderful parents, carers and children for such a busy week of remote learning. The children are so lucky to have such a supportive group of parents. We appreciate it's a very challenging time to manage, school work, your work and home life so please keep an eye on your wellbeing too!

As Mr Walker, has outlined here, staff are constantly reviewing how to optimise the remote learning experience and how they can best support you and your children in the weeks ahead. In the very wise words of Ms Webb and Mrs Hill (Year 6 teachers) in their message yesterday, 'We need to see this time as a marathon rather than a sprint!'

[chair@highbeeches.herts.sch.uk](mailto:chair@highbeeches.herts.sch.uk)

## Further Information and Reminders

The requirement to communicate information about the school closure this week was a reminder of the need for parents to ensure they remain logged into the School Jotter app. In some cases, parents have found that they are not logged in or that the need for the app to update has resulted in their being logged out. Usernames are usually *firstname.surname* and passwords can be reset on request. More information on how to make sure you have the app and are logged in below:

## High Beeches Primary School - Home-school Communication



Parents can receive all our latest newsletters and other communication by downloading the *School Jotter* App (by *Webanywhere*) from the Appstore (for iPhone users) or Google Play Store (for android). Once you have downloaded it, simply search for High Beeches and login using the username and password provided by the school, when or shortly after your child is enrolled at the school.

- The school will provide parents with a username and password and they should log in by clicking on the padlock icon to receive messages.
- Once logged in, the messages icon will appear and parents will receive private or targeted messages which are only visible when logged in.
- All app users receive weekly newsletters and community information flyers via the Newsletters area and these are also published on the school website.
- Short generic messages, visible to all app users come via the Notices area.
- Users should check their phone settings to ensure they receive notifications for new newsletters, messages and notices.

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