



BROAD CHALKE C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs Amanda Brockway

Chair of Governors: Mrs Louise Hall



26th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I can't believe that it's nearly the end of January, time seems to have gone by so fast. I hope that time is not dragging by for you. It's such a strange time for everyone and this lockdown feels so different to being in lockdown over the spring / summer. It sometimes seems like the weeks and months fly by but the days are endless. It's been very busy here at school as we once again adapt to doing things differently and cope with the latest directives from the government. This is a fast changing situation, so anything which I write now may be superseded within days by the government.

When will schools be open to all?

This is the big question for us all! It seems unlikely at this stage that this will happen immediately after February half term. Possibly, we will be directed to have certain year groups in again or possibly stay as we are until Easter but regrettably, headteachers know no more than anyone else until the government makes their announcements.

February Half Term Holiday

Schools are not being asked to open over half-term for child care. Therefore, the local authority asks schools to remind parents to find their own child care solutions across half-term as the schools will be closed.

Free School Meals over February Half Term

Wiltshire Council has been provided with the funding for free school meals during the half term break. They have budgeted £15 per child for the period and are planning on mirroring the arrangements adopted over the Christmas holiday. So it won't be an EdenRed voucher but hopefully it won't seem too unfamiliar as last time we offered parents the choice of a cheque or cash.

Lateral Flow Device Tests

The latest development was the introduction of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests for staff in primary schools from this week. The advice from Public Health was that children in the affected bubble self-isolate on the basis of the LFD test. I specifically emailed Public Health to ask this question in relation to our school bubbles, as it was not made clear in any of the briefings or written advice, and was told:

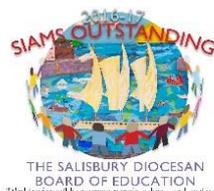
'The following quote is taken from the DHSC (Dec 20) 'Clinical Standard Operating Procedure for Mass Testing with Lateral Flow Antigen Testing Devices in Schools and Colleges.

8.1 The current national policy does not require close contact self-isolation as a legal requirement for LFD results until the positive confirmatory test result, but in the interest of public health, contacts should self-isolate or be given the option to enrol in daily contact testing from this point. It would be considered reasonable for a setting to ask a bubble to self-isolate as a precaution whilst awaiting the results from a PCR test of someone who had tested positive on a lateral flow device.'

Daily contact testing is of course not relevant to us in primary schools. I hope that this clarifies the situation that children **will need to self-isolate at home** and not be put into any sort of child care.

Remote Education

As you know, we are using Seesaw as our learning platform and this is generally being well received by parents and children and aiding engagement. We are very grateful for the positive emails which we have received about our Remote Learning. Several parents have commented that the use of Seesaw has made the task of home learning easier than it was last year.



Work is both set and submitted back on Seesaw which enables children to receive feedback and marking to maintain quality with their work and to aid motivation. I get all the notifications for all classes so that I can monitor engagement and also quality. The teachers will sometimes send work by email if this is more appropriate. The teachers also provide work which is not dependent on children being in front of a screen such as practical and art activities. This is particularly important for our younger pupils and for everyone's well-being.

Seesaw is working well although sometimes it is disappointing for teachers when the children do not even attempt the set tasks. It's a difficult balance, we support our families in making the choices which work for you but we also do not want any child to be left behind. If the children do the work set then they will not get behind or need to catch up. It can also cause difficulties when the children complete work out of synch with the rest of the class. For example, if the class teacher has set work in maths and is referring to that in the live Zoom sessions and planning a sequence of lessons, it is difficult if children are still working on lessons set from the previous week or not submitting any work at all.

I don't underestimate the difficulties where parents are juggling working from home with supporting the home learning; where there are multiple children in the family and not enough devices for one each; and where children may not be keen to engage. I know it really is very challenging. I can see it from both sides but we are just asking for best endeavours to keep the class together as a whole as much as possible. This also applies where children are in school part-time. If they don't complete the work on their days at home, it makes it extra challenging for our teaching assistants who are following the daily work set by the class teacher on Seesaw.

If the children do the work set now, ideally on the right day, with the support from their parents and teachers, no child needs to be left behind. If you are struggling to get your child to do the work then a telephone call from their teacher can help. Please do keep in touch with us if you need support as it's in the best interests of everyone.

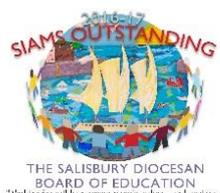
Teachers are also holding daily Zoom sessions to stay in touch with their classes. We are developing the expertise amongst the teaching assistants to allow the children in school to be included in the Zoom calls as a group. Some teachers are experimenting with short 'live' teaching sessions via Zoom but this does present issues for those children where homes do not have a good broadband connection or where families are sharing a device so it is more inclusive for all if the majority of our remote learning is not 'live'. The school broadband is not able to support multiple live streams from classes in school. Several classes have experienced the Zoom call crashing. Please bear with us. We know it's not ideal but we also believe a daily live interaction is important. I also know that some children find the daily Zoom calls difficult but they can join with their cameras turned off. It's so important that the children still feel connected to their class and to their teacher.

Devices

Some children may unfortunately not have their own individual devices for online learning. As we get more devices delivered, we may be able to help more with this. **Please do get in touch if you still need a device for home learning.** The school will be provided with an allocation of five devices and we have also applied for five 4G routers for parents with no access to broadband. We had already placed an order for new pupil laptops and staff laptops from our own funds before Christmas. FOBS have also kindly agreed to buy us a further set of iPads. However, the demand for devices is high so wait times are longer than usual.

Broadband is also an issue for many families. Whilst we can not sort that issue out, we have been allocated some dongles and 4G sim cards which will help if the home has got 4G coverage. What schools cannot do is ensure there is a network level filtering on home broadband connections but we can support parents to make sure there are some safeguards. For example:

- Info on parental controls can be found at [saferinternet.org](https://www.saferinternet.org)
- Step -by-step guides on device level filtering can be found at [internetmatters.org](https://www.internetmatters.org)



Staff changes

I am sad to have to tell you that Mrs Newsome, our wonderful music and French teacher will be leaving us at Easter. Mrs Newsome has worked at the school for 15 years and has inspired our children to love French, music and singing. We are lucky to have held on to her for so long. The impact which Mrs Newsome had had on the school has been significant. The enthusiasm and energy which she brings will be sorely missed. I know that it will be a wrench for Mrs Newsome to leave our community but Mr and Mrs Newsome have bought a house in Cornwall, close to family, something which has been their aim to do for some time. So although it is very sad for us, I am very happy for them. **If you would like to contribute to a leaving gift in recognition of all that Mrs Newsome has done, then please do send a cheque/ cash in an envelope or contribute via ParentPay.**

I am pleased to be able to tell you that curriculum music lessons are going to be taken over by Mr Chris Turner who already works at our school one day a week and French lessons by Mrs Sally Crosse who, as a French graduate has been teaching French to our younger children for many years.

Ventilation in school

Government advice is that classrooms should be well ventilated. There is obviously a balance here between thermal comfort and ventilation but as a minimum staff must open up doors and windows at break times to purge the air in the space so wearing an **extra layer is advised to keep warm.**

Are you concerned children will find the latest lockdown difficult? Support is available

There are a number of online resources that provide ideas on how to talk through concerns with children. Please have a look at the links below for ideas.

- [Triple P UK](#) has a parenting area with information, tips, tools and strategies for parents and carers of children and young people as well as a [Facebook page](#).
- [Care for the family](#) has specific information for parents and carers of children with additional needs as well as generic parenting information and a [Facebook page](#).

For support on other issues you can access [On Your Mind website](#) which provides free, safe and anonymous online support for young people. There is also [a new advice page](#) for Wiltshire parents and carers which includes practical strategies to support children with their mental health and wellbeing and also [Oxford Health](#) for further support on child mental health.

BBC Teach Live Lessons

The BBC has produced some wonderful curriculum linked educational content which is definitely worth tuning into, especially if you are struggling to get your child to engage with the learning set by class teachers. Please follow this link to see what is available or just search for BBC Teach Live Lessons <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/live-lessons/primary-live-lessons/zmc9jhw>

Finally

I am incredibly proud of the children who are working so hard either at home or at school and very thankful to the parents for supporting them. I'm also grateful to our exceptional staff team who have risen to the huge challenge of managing both in school provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, alongside organising remote learning for those children at home. Staff are doing their best to embrace new technology and teach in a very different way. This term our value is perseverance and it has never felt so relevant as now.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Amanda Brockway
Headteacher

