



8th January 2021
Dear Boughton Families

I hope that you are all well and safe during this most challenging of times.

A number of common themes have emerged from various communications over the last week and I wanted to share my own perspective with you in order to answer some important questions.

The key points I will address further on in this letter are:

- School closure and current guidance
- Attendance expectations
- Bubble closure
- Remote learning (including additional support)
- Our expectations of what parents can realistically do, if at home with their children

I ask that all parents read all the information within the letter, as it may answer some of the questions you have about what we are doing, and why.

THANK YOU

Thank you to parents for your tolerance and support in an ever-changing landscape. We value our partnership with you. Thank you for understanding that we are all doing our best at school; *we heard at exactly the same time as you did* that schools were going to close.

We've put in the place the best offer we can, given the exceptionally short notice. I've included some expectations and support later in this letter.

Thank you to the staff team, who have gone over and above to enable school to open to those eligible, in a timely and efficient way, and with good grace. They've provided home learning packs to everyone who can't be in school.

They've made difficult decisions, changes to plans, supported parents with their enquiries and concerns, all with a smile.

In addition to this, they have worked tirelessly to provide a safe and happy environment for every child during the past 10 months.

Just as we did last year, we will work together through the challenges ahead.

With very best wishes

Mary James

Head Teacher

SCHOOL CLOSURE

This took us all by surprise and I fully appreciate the difficult position this has placed parents in. It has also created a situation for schools which is unlike that experienced during the first lockdown, back in March 2020.

The purpose of a national school closure is to try and reduce the number of contacts children and adults have each day, in order to try and prevent transmission of the virus and alleviate pressure on the NHS.

Whilst we all recognise that being at school in term-time is what should be happening, the reality we are facing is that the pandemic continues and therefore we are all trying to play our part in limiting transmission of COVID19.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS YEAR, COMPARED TO LOCKDOWN ONE?

When this happened last year, many parents found themselves furloughed or unable to work. The keyworker list was less broad than now; the expectation on schools was to provide childcare and something for children to learn at home.

This time around, the list of key workers is much lengthier; many jobs fit the categories. The furlough scheme has changed and many parents are now back at work. Although many are working from home, their jobs demand their full attention in doing so. Schools have been told that only one parent needs to be a keyworker to qualify for a place and directed to accept as many pupils as possible.

Last year, we were given guidance which included limiting the numbers of staff and children in the building at any one time, hence we worked on a rota system and could only allow a certain number of pupils into each bubble.

The guidance this time does not place such restrictions on schools, in fact it is not dissimilar to the guidance for full reopening.

*When we closed in March 2020, the initial registration list was 6% of the school roll: 12 children. This time the uptake for keyworker places represents **40%** of the school roll.*

We shared our link to the Critical Workers' form on Sunday 3rd January 2021, as there was so much speculation about schools closing. We set a deadline for registration for Critical Workers as Tuesday 5th January 2021 at 9a.m. and had to close the registration for places at that point, so that we could plan effectively, and also to make sure that we were also keeping in mind the principle and purpose of closure, i.e. trying to reduce the number of contacts the children and adults at school have. We have taken the information shared with us by parents on trust and have accommodated everyone that applied by the deadline.

Schools nationally have been presented with a huge challenge. As a school we have done, and will continue to do, the best we can for the pupils both on-site and at home.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

The offer of a place to each child whose parents completed the registration form is **full time**. This was explained at the top of the form that critical workers completed, and in the letter sent out to confirm your child's place.

WHY FULL TIME?

There are several reasons for this:

- Continuity for your child
- Continuity for the teacher, in knowing the numbers they will have in their class bubble every day
- Resourcing the learning offer – the children at home have a pack that was delivered to them, the children at school have their pack kept in school. We are not able to allow these to travel to and from school as we are trying to limit the transmission of the virus.

Absences need to be notified to the school office in the usual way and will not be penalised.

For safeguarding purposes, we will still follow our first-day response procedure for those we are expecting in school, i.e a phone call home if we have not been notified of absence.

The hours for attendance during this period of partial closure are:

Monday to Thursday 9a.m. to 3p.m.

Friday 9a.m. to 12.30p.m.

Doors/gates open at 8.45a.m. each morning.

Friday afternoon is used by staff for cleaning, planning and preparation. Teachers will meet at 12.45p.m. on Fridays, to discuss issues arising regarding the home-learning offer and to find solutions, trying to ensure consistency as far as possible across the school.

BUBBLE CLOSURE

We have no capacity to cover bubbles if we have any staff illness during this time. *Therefore, we may have to close a bubble at short notice should this eventuality arise.*

If any pupil or adult in school shows symptoms of COVID19, the bubble will close whilst awaiting the outcome of a test.

If the teacher of the bubble is well enough to do so, they will continue the remote learning offer. If not, parents will be provided with up to 10 days (2 school weeks) learning activities.

REMOTE LEARNING

The staff team has worked incredibly hard to get this up and running. It has been a mountain to climb, both in terms of the technological understanding needed, but also in ensuring that all the children at home have the pack they need to support their learning.

Since October 2020, schools have been tasked with a statutory (legal) duty to provide high-quality remote education. This is very different to the lockdown in spring 2020. Therefore, we are ensuring the following:

- Some live teaching for each class each day
- Opportunities to engage with the class teacher
- For pupils in Y2 upwards, daily tasks on Google Classroom which children can undertake at home at a time convenient to the family
- Marking and feedback via Google Classroom

From the school's perspective, we are very mindful of the amount of missed learning during last year's lockdown. We are therefore trying to ensure that we are providing a meaningful learning experience for the children, and a consistent approach across the school.

However, we are also very mindful that the disruption to the children's lives is going to have an impact on their social, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Therefore, I wanted to try and help parents manage their expectations of themselves and their children if attempting home learning:

1. We are not expecting you to teach. We are only asking that you facilitate your child's access to what we are offering.
2. We don't want to put your child or you under undue pressure during an already stressful time.
3. We are trying to ensure that there is continuity for your child and that we are building on what they have already learned at school this year.
4. We know that not everyone can access the lessons at the times that we go "live" so we are recording them and will be using Vimeo to share them. Please bear with us on this, the school wifi is struggling to cope with the demand!
5. We are grateful for EVERYTHING you are doing to try and help your child to continue to engage with learning. It's hard! Thank you.
6. We would much prefer to be open as normal to all pupils!

The school sets out the following minimum expectation for children learning at home:

- Read every day
- Access at least one live lesson/activity each day. If you have more than one child at school, we will do our best to manage the timings but it's not going to be possible to please everyone. Therefore, you could set up a system where one of your children accesses the live lesson each day and the other accesses the recording.
- If joining a live lesson, the children are expected to be sitting and ready to learn – teachers will remind children of behaviour expectations but we ask for parents' support in this too. Filters, funny faces etc need to be saved for family Zoom times! (I know how tempting it is!)
- Carry out the other activities the teacher sets, on Tapestry (Reception and Year 1) and on Google Classroom (Year 2 upwards).
- Do other things together...play, bake, make... use the time to learn in a range of ways!

In March last year I wrote:

We have been given an unprecedented opportunity to spend time with our families and particularly our children. It won't be long before your children inevitably leave this wonderful stage of their development. Make the most of it. Enjoy it. Yours and their mental health is extremely important at this time.

Be kind to yourselves! This is an incredibly tough time for us all. Everyone is doing the best they can. Sometimes we can only be "good enough" and when it comes to trying to home-school a primary aged child, anything you can do is exactly that: good enough.

DEVICES FOR REMOTE LEARNING

You will have seen much on the news and social media regarding the DfE making additional provision of devices to enable home learning.

When we closed last year, our allocation of devices was the princely total of ... *one!*


We are awaiting further information as to whether there will be more devices made available to us this time.

If there are difficulties at home regarding your child's access to remote learning, due to either:


- No working devices in the home
- Devices in the home are not available due to both parents working from home
- Devices in the home are not available due to having secondary aged siblings who need them to study,

please do contact your child's teacher in the usual way and we will do what we can to help.

Google Classroom can be accessed via games consoles: the information below explains how to do this:



1. Turn on PS4
2. Use your controller to scroll to the far right of the bar with games to *Library*
3. Select *Library* application
4. Within the library use the search bar to type in *Internet*
5. Select the *Internet Browser* app
6. Start Internet Browser and press the triangle button on the controller to search
7. Once on the internet, type in the search box *Google Classroom* and select the first link that comes up:
Classroom: manage teaching and learning Google for Education - link below'
<https://edu.google.com/products/classroom>
8. Select *Go to Classroom*. Then log in using student email and password.



1. Go to Home Menu
2. Select *My Games and Apps*
3. Scroll down to *Apps*
4. Go to *Microsoft Edge* application
5. Type in a search for *Google Classroom*
6. Select *Go to Classroom*
7. You will need to log in using your student email address and password.

PIC•COLLAGE

COMMUNICATION

We pride ourselves on our open channels of communication at Boughton. You can contact your child's teacher directly via either Tapestry (Reception/Year 1) or gmail (Y2 to Y6). Please do keep talking to us, particularly with regards to home learning. We can't promise to solve every problem but we will do our best.

Remember that we are human...we weren't prepared for this...we have our own health and families to consider too.

Thank you, our Boughton community, for being fantastic in the face of adversity.

Mary James

Head Teacher