



# Belmont Primary School Newsletter January 8th 2021



Dear Parents / Carers,

Firstly and foremostly, I would like to wish all of you a happy new year and very much hope that you managed to make the best of the two week break in spite of the restrictions which were in place. At this point, I would be welcoming you all back to the start of a new term and, although everybody is working either at home or, for some, in school, it somehow seems rather odd to be doing so.

It goes without saying that this has been both a strange and somewhat unpredictable week, especially as we have been assured over the past few months that under no circumstances would government enforce partial closure on schools. With this in mind, I can quite honestly say that I was rather surprised by Monday's announcement and, we were certainly not provided with any prior notice. However, many, many thanks for all of your support and patience over the past few days as we moved into the new restrictions. Thank you also for all of the messages of support which have been shared with us, either in conversation or via electronic means. Be assured that we pass on all of these comments to staff and they are a genuine morale booster to us all. Further to this, so many of you offered to assist with the 'work pack drops' this week. Apologies if I have not been in touch in person to offer my gratitude but please do accept this as thanks for your generous and thoughtful offer. Unfortunately we are unable to accept these offers as, due to GDPR, we are unable to share addresses of families with those who do not work within the school. These past few days have once again reinforced the remarkable strength and support of our school community.

### Children Working Remotely

Speaking as a parent, supporting children working at home is a hugely challenging task. We are continuing to make the activities as 'child user friendly' as is possible and hopefully, the books and packs you will have (hopefully) received this week will alleviate some of the challenges which will exist in terms of accessing 'online' activities. Obviously, these packs will not last forever and there will be the need to access the online work set by the staff. The recommended minimum time expected to be spent on 'school work' at home as set by the Department for Education is three hours per day. However, from my own perspective, this can include activities such as reading, either to an adult or, for more autonomous readers, independently. It would help us enormously if you could maintain contact with your child's class teacher every couple of days or so through Freeflow. We will be making weekly telephone calls home also.

We have had a number of queries in relation to the consideration of 'live' lessons. We have discussed this as staff with the one major caveat being the limit to the school's broadband 'bandwidth'. However, it may be that we can schedule different times for different year groups, thus limiting the amount required (remembering to consider that there are children in school who may also be streaming online content for their learning too!). We will, as always, keep you updated on all developments in this area.

Something else we are looking at is a slightly more 'all encompassing' method of sharing home educational activities. As always we will keep you fully informed and updated as we progress with this.

One way I hope to make some form of contact between home and school is through a weekly 'assembly' for each individual phase. This will involve sharing via Freeflow a 'Zoom' link for parents and carers to follow where I can share a story or, in the case of children in Key Stage Two, serialise a story over the coming weeks, perhaps a case of 'Mr Gibson's Storytime Goes Live' for those who recall the YouTube uploads last year! Keep an eye out on Freeflow for the joining instructions but be aware that, other than my own, cameras and microphones will need to be switched off.

### Children In School

Compared to the previous 'partial closure' which began in March, we do have a large number of children in school (approximately five times as many children registered). However, we are, as far as possible, ensuring that home tasks and those set in school follow the same objectives whereby all children will have access to the same tasks. Also, we continue to follow our stringent risk assessments to help reduce the possibility of infection to both staff and children.

### Staff in School

I would like to thank all of our staff for adapting so quickly to the changing situation despite the fact we do have a number of staff unable to attend school for various reasons. As well as the teachers who are both teaching face to face and setting remote tasks, our support staff have also been busy with numerous tasks, not least printing and delivering approximately 300 work packs across the area as well as organising numbers of children attending school through Monday night and beyond. A real team effort as always.

### And Finally...

Apologies for all of the information being thrown at you in this communication. The overriding message I want to share is for you all to take care of yourselves and, above all, if there are any concerns, please do contact us. We do not want anybody feeling anxious or concerned about issues school related. We are here to help as far as we possibly can.

I hope the weather picks up to allow you to get outside for a bit over the weekend (within the guidelines, of course!).

With our very best wishes as always,

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Gibson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the 'i' in Gibson.

Mr C Gibson