

Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

TLC

Hillcrest Primary School

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Try

Hillcrest Downham Market

Norfolk

PE38 9ND

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19th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE 2021 UPDATE 4: EFFECTS OF POSITIVE COVID CASE CONTINUES TO BE FELT IN SCHOOL

Self-Isolation

We now have 15 pupils and 9 members of staff in self-isolation following last week's confirmation of a positive Covid case in school.

The staffing rota for Key Worker and Vulnerable Children has been revised for this week with staff who also have to manage their interactions with the children on their Google Classroom whilst at home having to increase their presence in school in order to cover the Emergency Childcare Provision.

It continues to be crucial now more than ever, that the children are at home whenever possible and undertaking their remote learning activities with places in school at a premium whilst we have staff self-isolating.

Therefore children should not be in school if...

- ***Both parents are NOT Key Workers;***
- ***There is a responsible adult at home who can care for your child;***
- ***You work from home;***
- ***You missed the deadline of 10am on Friday to request a place.***

We also don't have the flexibility to manage day-to-day changes in demand which is why we have to ask parents to contact us by 10am on the previous Friday so that we can plan staffing levels for the following week. Therefore, please do not contact the school to ask if your child can have a place if you have missed that deadline.

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Keeping Up To Date with Google Classrooms

Class Teachers have been asked to take a register of interactions with pupils over Google Classroom much in the same way that we keep a register of their attendance at school.

After our first experience of remote learning during the Summer Term, the government were keen that schools learned lessons and improved their online provision in preparation for any future lockdown.

Hillcrest launched their updated Remote Learning Policy towards the end of September 2020 which laid the foundations for the new and improved Google Classroom and Virtual Timetable that you are now becoming more and more familiar with.

The most significant change that was prompted by the government's response to the first lockdown experience, was that all future plans for remote learning must follow the curriculum that the children could expect to have been taught if they were in school as normal.

The aim being that the massive attainment gap that grew out of the first lockdown was because the online learning provided by most schools was not following the full Primary Curriculum that would have been taught in school. Therefore the children were returning to school in September without covering much of the curriculum content that they should have expected to have covered which meant that key skills, knowledge and understanding were missing.

However, working hard to provide a remote curriculum that ensures the children are up to speed with the curriculum content designed for their age is only effective if the children are actually participating in the work.

Teachers are reporting mixed experiences across the school in terms of numbers of pupils who are regularly participating, logging on daily but only completing some pieces of work or not participating at all.

Fortunately the numbers not participating at all are low and where we are concerned about a child's engagement with their online learning, we have been phoning home to try to establish what the problem is.

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The bigger problem is the amount of pupils who are logging on but cherry-picking which activities they fancy doing.

The activities provided by the teacher cover most subject areas and are intended to provide the full breadth of what a child should be doing in school. By choosing to miss some activities out, the children are both missing out on vital skills and also potentially hampering their ability to succeed with a future activity if it builds upon the earlier one.

Maths activities tend to be more popular and most well attended and completed whereas English activities are less well completed. As a school, this gives us some cause for concern upon our return later in the term and a fear that there may have to be a further catch up programme for English if skills have fallen further behind during the lockdown.

Differentiating work for children of different abilities has been a particular challenge online. One way of providing this differentiation is to set different challenges for the children. Most staff are doing this through the videos they are posting online of them teaching. At the end of the video clips there will often be a series of challenges (some staff call these 'chilli' challenges). The idea is that the more able pupils challenge themselves with the more complex activities whereas the less able pupils equally have something that they can succeed with. It would appear that there are a number of children who are choosing the easiest activity regardless of their academic ability. Therefore, we would urge parents to encourage their children to make the right choices and to really challenge themselves when given the opportunity to do so.

Expect a call from school if your child is not online!

Laptop Loan

Hillcrest have loaned out a number of new laptops to those families struggling most with computer access since the start of this new lockdown.

Provided by the Department for Education, these laptops can only be loaned out to families who meet the government's criteria for vulnerable families along with only being available for children from Year 3 upwards.

The laptops only enable the user to have Internet access and connect to the family's wi-fi network. However, the Department for Education security settings mean that any website

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accessed using the laptop can be tracked and therefore it is only to be used for educational purposes and not for any other family use. Other software cannot be downloaded onto it and once the lockdown is over and schools reopen, the expectation is that the laptop is returned to the school in the same condition that it was in when loaned out.

If you feel your family may be classed as vulnerable and you are struggling with access to a PC, laptop or iPad for your child, then please email Mrs White on SENDCO@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk and your name can be added to a list and assessed to see whether your family meets the strict criteria.

School Kitchen

From Monday 25th January the school kitchen will be closed and will not reopen until the schools are fully operational again. Therefore, all children attending the Emergency Childcare Provision will require a packed lunch.

Also returning for the first time since the last lockdown are the Supermarket Food Vouchers for those children in receipt of Free School Meals. From Monday 25th January all pupils registered with Norfolk County Council for Free School Meals will receive a weekly supermarket voucher to the value of £15 per child per week. With the closure of the school kitchen starting from the same period, the expectation is that any child in receipt of Free School Meals and who is attending the Emergency Childcare Provision, brings a packed lunch in from home that is made using the items purchased with the National Food Vouchers.

Applying for Free School Meals

In the event that your employment status or financial circumstances have changed as a result of the new lockdown, you may find that you are eligible to receive Free School Meals.

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you claim any of the following:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit

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- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Therefore, we would encourage those parents who think that they may qualify for Free School Meals to register with Norfolk County Council via the following website...

www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo

Please note that children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will NOT automatically be entitled to receive the Free School Meal National Vouchers if, as expected, they return in due course, even though they receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

Parents of children in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 who think that they would qualify for Free School Meals after looking at the qualifying list above, should still register through the www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo website as you may continue to be able to get that support as the Food Voucher system has now come back online. Similarly, parents of children in Key Stage 2 should also register if their employment circumstances have changed.

Learning is Everywhere

There are some out there who will feel that there is too much work provided by the school through Google Classrooms whilst others will feel that the amount is just right.

There will be a third group who will always want more work, no matter how much their teachers place online.

There are a plentiful supply of learning opportunities both on TV and online for those craving additional work.

BBC Lockdown Learning

The BBC are devoting 3 hours each morning of air time on CBBC to Lockdown Learning – programmes that support your child in various aspects of the curriculum. These programmes are on air between 9.00am and 12noon weekdays.

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BBC Bitesize

The long-established educational tool BBC Bitesize has a 'Learning at Home' section full of resources and activities across a wide range of curriculum subjects. They can be located at...
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/this-terms-topics

Superhero Science with Maddie and Greg

This live family Science Show can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/maddiemoate> where the couple broadcast daily half hour live shows (recordings of which can also be seen on their You Tube site)

Oak National Academy Virtual Library

The Oak National Academy will be far more familiar to parents during this lockdown than the previous one as many year groups have had links to Oak Academy lessons within their Virtual Timetable.

They have now launched, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, a virtual library where famous children's authors will release their favourite books each week accompanied by free reading and writing activities.

This virtual library can be accessed at...

<https://library.thenational.academy/>

ALL ADULTS TO WEAR FACE MASKS ON THE SCHOOL SITE WHILST DROPPING CHILDREN OFF AND COLLECTING THEM

This will also apply to those parents dropping their children off for the Emergency Childcare Provision throughout the lockdown.

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DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO THE EMERGENCY CHILDCARE PROVISION IF...

- ...they display a temperature of 37.6 degrees or higher;
- ...they have a persistent cough (regardless of whether you believe this to be caused by something else);
- ---they complain of a sudden and extreme loss of taste or smell.

In the event that they are displaying these symptoms, you MUST get your child tested as they will NOT be accepted back into school until a NEGATIVE Covid-19 test has been received and their symptoms have subsided.

If your child develops any of these symptoms whilst at school, we will isolate them and then ask you to come and collect them.

And Finally...

A huge thank you to those Key Workers who have listened to our concerns about pupil numbers and who have made alternative arrangements this week to care for their children at home.

We appreciate that working from home and caring for your children whilst supporting them with their own schoolwork is not necessarily easy. We have several members of our teaching staff who are juggling their young children whilst recording lessons for Google Classrooms and interacting with their pupils throughout the day. They too will understand the pressures that are going on in many households.

There is no certainty at present regarding the return to normal schooling other than the fact that we are definitely in this situation until the February half-term. Beyond that is a bit of a mystery and will be determined by other factors relating to the virus and the vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Try