

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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26th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE 2021 UPDATE 5: TRYING TO MAKE AN IMPERFECT SITUATION MANAGEABLE FOR ALL

Remote Learning

As the duration of this lockdown starts to really bite, I wanted to say a huge thank you to all of the parents and carers who are juggling the usual things that daily life throws at you alongside supporting your children with their online learning.

Despite the expectations for online learning raised this time round compared to the first lockdown, we are aware of how tricky it is to keep all the plates spinning at home; especially in households with multiple children and in families where the adults have significant demands made on them by their employers. We are not blind to the demands and stresses that this lengthy period of school closure places on everyone, so thank you!

When we referred in the precious update to children being selective about the activities they chose to take part in, that was a genuine concern about the position the children may face when they eventually return to school if they regularly choose to opt out of one of the subjects in particular. As mentioned previously, our biggest concern is for English which appears to be the poor relative during this lockdown and which is, of course, a skill that the children need to keep practicing.

Although the staff have been logging the number of interactions with the children since the beginning of the school closure, we have asked the staff for more specific information from the start of this week. The teachers will be recording three pieces of information each day. These are...

- Does the pupil log on each morning;
- Does the pupil submit their English work for the day, on the day it was set;
- Does the pupil submit their Maths work for the day, on the day it was set.

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The best outcome is, of course, if the children are able to complete all of the work that is set for the day as they may be asked to practice skills that will be important for future lessons.

However, we are realistic about what can be achieved in busy households with competing demands on people's time and the availability of the technology. Therefore, we are pleased to see children logging on daily even if they have been unable to complete all of the activities that have been set each day. If time, or other pressures, do not allow for all of the work to be completed, then we would recommend that the English and Maths activities are given the highest priority.

The reference in the last update to a call from school if your child is not online, referred specifically to that small minority of children who we do not hear from online for several days. We have a duty to follow those families up and that is the expectation of us as set by the local authority and the Department for Education. We make a small number of calls on most days to see if there is any additional support that we can offer to get those children online.

Emergency Childcare Provision CLOSED Over Half-Term

The Department for Education has announced today that the Emergency Childcare Provision for Key Workers and Vulnerable Children WILL NOT continue through the February half-term break and that Hillcrest will be completely closed between Monday 15th February and Friday 19th February (inclusive).

Celebrating Good Work and Effort Online

All class teachers should now be using the same Merit system that is normally used in school to reward good work and effort shown by children whilst on Google Classroom.

It is vital that we do what we can to support you at home in keeping the children motivated and energised. Hopefully by recognising that their work is appreciated and rewarded in the same way as it would be at school with Housepoints and Merits, they can continue to move towards achieving their next certificate and look forward to collecting a book from Mr Try's office when they are next in school.

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Issues with Logging On to Google Classroom

In the event that you are struggling to access Google Classroom, please email your child's Class Teacher in the first instance who should be able to solve your problem. In the event that they cannot assist or you have tried what they have suggested but are still having problems, then please email Mrs White at SENDSCO@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk if your child is in Year R, 1 or 2. If your child is in Years 3, 4, 5 or 6 then please direct your query to Mr Reeve-Hayes at deputyhead@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk.

Virtual Timetable

The staff are always working hard to take suggestions from parents on board if they are of practical help to make the system easier for the children to navigate.

On some Google Classroom streams, the Virtual Timetable can be quite hard to find, especially later in the week. Therefore, class teachers are trying to make the Virtual Timetable more prominent each day by moving it to the top of the stream so that the children can clearly see what they have to do each day.

Reading Stars Reading Planet

Hopefully the children are relishing the opportunity to continue reading quality material throughout lockdown using the Reading Stars Reading Planet online resource. We apologise if you got caught out at home with the initial issues that we experienced where the children were assigned a huge number of books rather than the one that the teacher wanted them to read at the time. This was a global issue that affected all schools using the system and a sign of just how many schools and pupils are trying to access the resource at the same time.

Staff News

We have had two returnees from Maternity Leave this term. Miss Hancox returned at the start of the term to the strange world of online learning and Emergency Childcare Provision.

More recently, this week we will see the return of Miss O'Dea who rejoins a very different school to the one she left, having started her Maternity Leave just before the first lockdown started.

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In the opposite direction, we will see Miss Benefer leaving to start her Maternity Leave at the beginning of March. Miss Hancox has been supporting Europa Class with their Google Classroom alongside Miss Benefer as, after Miss Benefer departs and the school returns to normal, Miss Hancox will take on her teaching role and responsibility for Europa.

SRB Update

Work on the new Specialist Resource Base at Hillcrest begins after the February half-term break with the contractors moving onto site. All access for the construction vehicles will be via a new access gate to the school that is being added to the rear of the school field, off Civray Avenue.

The building of two new classrooms and additional break-out rooms and staff areas, will be completed ready for the start of the Autumn Term when we will accept our first children into the SRB. The work will also see the removal of the final mobile building on site.

We are currently advertising for a KS2 Lead Teacher and Higher Level Teaching Assistant for the SRB with the 1st February set as the deadline for applications. The job adverts can be viewed at...

<https://www.educationjobfinder.org.uk/vfjobs/ks2-lead-teacher-for-srb-learning-cognition/?fromSearchPage=true>

<https://www.educationjobfinder.org.uk/vfjobs/higher-level-teaching-assistant-for-srb-learning-cognition/?fromSearchPage=true>

Applying for Free School Meals – Appeal to Parents of Children in Years R, 1 & 2

Because children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 automatically receive the Universal Infant Free School Meal when they are in school, there isn't always the rush to register to receive Free School Meals, even when the family's financial circumstances mean they would be entitled to them.

However, now that the National Food Vouchers are being made available to those parents who are registered to receive Free School Meals, it is important that parents with children lower down the school, who may be eligible to apply, take advantage of the opportunity.

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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
- 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

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.

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.*

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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...

There appears to be disagreement between the politicians and the health experts at present. Language being used by the politicians appears to be leaning on the side of the school closure lasting longer, perhaps until Easter, whilst Public Health England have come out today and said that Primary Schools are safe to reopen.

Whatever eventually happens, schools will definitely be closed until February half-term and possibly for at least a couple of weeks beyond that time. However long this period lasts for, we will continue to offer the best possible learning we can in a less than ideal situation and we thank all of the parents and other family members who are persevering with the Google Classrooms, helping to ensure that the children make the most from what they are provided by school.

Our staff cannot wait to see the children once again, at their desks, in normal-sized classes and learning with their friends. Whilst I am sure there will continue to be the need for social distancing and staggered starts when we do return, at the very least we can get the children back in school with their teachers soon.

We hope you are all staying safe at home and keeping clear of the virus.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Try