

Difficult Times

Remote (Home) Learning

Remote learning has now been in place since Wednesday 6th January and is being regularly engaged with by 98% of those children unable to come into school. It remains a priority for senior members of staff to work with and support those families who have not yet accessed this provision. The overall and general quality of work produced by the children continues to please. However, it is **very clearly and deeply understood by everyone working at Berrywood that supporting your child with home learning is a significant challenge** for many families. I think this is true for everyone, but is especially so for the parents of children who regularly receive additional support with their learning when in school. We will continue to listen to parent feedback and monitor our provision very closely in order to amend and improve it as quickly and effectively as we can.

By the end of next week or early into the following week, you will *begin* to see the inclusion of scheduled **live meetings** as part of your child's remote learning provision for their class. We are aiming for one daily live meeting of approximately 30 minutes for each class. Please note that these live meetings may not always be daily and this is especially likely in our initial roll out.

Live meetings / sessions are likely to be either:-

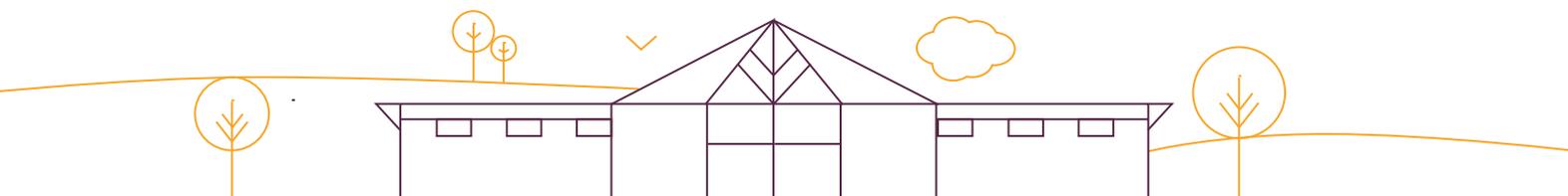
- A specific subject input such as English, Maths, Science or project
- or,**
- A general question and answer / feedback session to support the children with their remote learning

We see the principal benefits of a daily live meeting for the class as:-

- Providing the opportunity for *some* 'real time' interaction between the children and the teaching staff;
- Trying to keep intact the sense that the children are part of a class with opportunities to 'see' each other on screen;
- Keeping pupil motivation levels as high as we can within the constraints of remote learning.

I think it is really important to state that this is not a silver bullet that will suddenly make the task of supporting your child's home learning significantly easier. However, we do think it will take *some* of the strain out the situation for a number of you.

As I hope the section directly below adequately portrays, the current level of challenge being faced at Berrywood is as high as I have experienced in my time here as headteacher. Nevertheless, the commitment and dedication of staff to provide our very best for the whole school community remains something of which I am incredibly proud to be associated with. Pulling together as a whole school community isn't easy in these circumstances, but is something worth striving for. It is with this sentiment in mind that I ask parents to understand the **significant workload and other pressures** on members of staff currently and remain patient and supportive as we endeavour to further strengthen our remote learning provision.



Coronavirus Update

Since Christmas we have had approximately 200 different children accessing the in-school provision with, to date, two positive cases recorded. This continues to be a very challenging time for school staff. Since the beginning of January we have had a total of seven members of the staff team who have been mildly to moderately ill with Coronavirus. Symptoms tend to last for quite a while and most of these colleagues have experienced feeling 'wiped out'. Unfortunately for a couple of members of staff, their partners have suffered a more concerning severity of illness. Unsurprisingly, there is worry and some pretty troubled people as a result of these circumstances.

In some of these positive cases it is easier to see how a chain of transmission may have occurred, in others though it is anything but clear. Throughout the period since the holidays we have had many more staff and children who have tested negative, and all those who have tested positive have either recovered or are at least beginning to be on that brighter pathway. With community transmission rates continuing to be high however, it is hugely important that we are all as vigilant as possible in following the rules and guidance as they apply to us both individually and collectively.

With the lower numbers of staff and pupils in attendance, social distancing within school has certainly been more possible to achieve. Throughout this crisis it has been incumbent upon schools to implement proportionate safety measures that reduce the risks of transmission. This needs to be done whilst also providing a full curriculum experience and whilst maintaining a caring, welcoming school environment. Specifically on the issue of face coverings worn by members of staff in school, this is something that has certainly increased since the onset of the new variant - but remains discretionary, as per the Government guidance to primary schools.

Critical Worker In-school Provision

It is crystal clear the best way in which Critical Worker in response to Covid19 families can support us. **Only use the in-school service for your children when it is essential for you to do so.** Coronavirus is without question in and amongst our community; the fewer children in school the less likely that transmission occurs amongst Berrywood families and members of staff.

Notwithstanding this clear and critically important message, it is also important that Critical Worker families know that, bubble closures aside, we will continue to be open for you throughout the day from 7.45 – 5.30. Thank you to those families who continue to update us in terms of changing requirements via office@berrywoodprimary.co.uk I think that our next formal request for an electronic update of your requirements could come once we know whether or not we will be required to open during half term.

Finally, if your child has been accessing the critical worker provision and subsequently becomes unwell, please ensure you let us know as soon as you can if your child is having a coronavirus test. This will enable staff to start preparations for the closure of a bubble, should the result be positive, ensuring that contacts can be reached at the earliest convenience. Please email office@berrywoodprimary.co.uk as this email address is monitored regularly, particularly if you need to let us know out of hours.