

The Firs, Keeping in Touch!

Wednesday 1st April 2020

A Temporary replacement for our Newsletters

These are strange times of course and we wanted to regularly be communicating with all of you, at a time when there might not be as much school 'news' to share.

We have decided therefore, to carry on with a regular fortnightly publication but during the period of this partial school closure, we will be writing a 'Keeping in Touch' letter, rather than a 'newsletter'. We are starting with a letter to record all our end of term updates.

Learning at Home

This week, I wrote to you with details of our arrangements for Home Learning, which will be fully introduced after Easter. The letter is available on our website in the letters home section and on the Coronavirus page.

A message from Mrs Sherry and The Saplings Team...

We want to take this opportunity to say we hope all our little Saplings are having a happy and fun time playing with you at home and we are really missing you all. For those children starting school this September, we have sent home a pack of materials including a Set 1 Speed Sound book and a laminated name card. In addition, all our children received the 'Activities at home' leaflet.

Phonics video for children starting school this September

Phonics lessons are available to watch at home on YouTube. They'll be sharing daily phonics lessons every weekday, continuing during the Easter holidays. Repeats of lessons streamed up until Friday 3rd April will be shown during the Easter holidays (excluding Bank Holidays).

They will be available at 9.30am and again at 12.30pm. Please click on the following link to access the film:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo7fbLqY2oA_cFCIq9GdxtQ

Please note that the films are streamed live and will then be available for 24 hours via Facebook and on YouTube.

This week, Mrs Ashby will be emailing all Saplings parents to find out who would like the Easter fun pack printed, as well as emailed to them. If you request a pack, it will be left out for you this Friday. We will email you with the details later this week.

Keep playing, learning and having fun!

From everyone in The Saplings Team

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Free School Meals and FSM Vouchers

We have received some questions regarding this and I thought it might be helpful to set out the Government position in updated guidance 31/3/20:

'It is right that schools concentrate their effort and resources on those who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals at this time. There is no requirement to continue universal infant free school meals to pupils in YR, Y1 or Y2, who are unable to attend school' (as they have not been identified as 'vulnerable' or children of key worker parents).

We have been in touch with Parents/Carers of children who have 'benefit related' free school meals, regarding how the school will be ensuring an alternative to the usual school meal provision. The government has now launched its voucher scheme and we will be getting in touch with the parents/carers concerned to let them know how this will operate.

Repayments for Trips and the Residential visit

We are pleased to say that repayments for trips and the Grafham residential are now underway and parents/carers should start to see reimbursements into their accounts in the next few days. Thank you for your patience and understanding in regard to this matter.

Two Fun Competitions to enter! - A Message from the Book Club Team

We've created 2 competitions for children to have a go at if they'd like to.

1. Design Your Own Front Cover

Imagine you've written the best book ever. It's full of all your favourite things and now you've got to get seriously creative and design a cover that tells the world just exactly what your book's about. Is it a magical unicorn story or is it packed full of dragons and knights? Whatever it is, have a go at designing a cover for it and get your parent or carer to email a picture of it to us at thefirsbookclub@yahoo.com Please make sure you include your name, age and class and put "Front Cover" in the subject line of the email.

2. Write A Letter To Your Favourite Author

Have you been packing in your time off school with some reading? Would you love to let the author of your favourite book know how much you loved their story? Great! Have a go at writing a letter to them. Tell them what you thought was brilliant about their book, why it was so good, and how it made you feel when you were reading it. Perhaps you could even give them some ideas about how to make their story even better! Once you've written your letter please get your parent or carer to email it to us at thefirsbookclub@yahoo.com (if it's on paper just take a photo of it and send that). Please make sure you include your name, age and class and put "Author Letter" in the subject line of the email.

Children can enter both and we will pick a winner from each year group for both competitions! Deadline for both entries: Friday 10th April. Prizes will be awarded to all the winners!

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Pictures for the new Nightingale Hospital

We wanted to invite all our children to take part in what we feel is a lovely idea. The NHS have asked for children's pictures to be sent to them, to put up on the walls of the new Nightingale Hospital, being set up in the Excel Centre in London. The idea is to adorn the walls with children's pictures, to comfort and inspire patients and staff.

Please send children's pictures to nightingale@hbnhs.uk

Online Safety and Pastoral Care

Parentline - a confidential text messaging advice and support line has been launched for Bedfordshire parents and carers of children aged 0-19. Text: 07507 331456

There is a lot of support available to keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers that have been recommended by the DfE:

- [Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Net-aware](#) (support for parents and careers from the NSPCC)

Fire Safety Video

Kempston White Watch from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, bring you a 'virtual school visit', suitable for young primary school children.

Kempston Firefighter Tom Field said: "Whilst we cannot physically attend our usual school fire safety visits, we really want to continue to engage with our communities. Therefore, we decided to create a 'virtual school visit' that can be shared online to help spread important fire safety messages."

Station Commander Simon Williams added: "During this period of unprecedented isolation, it is important that we continue to engage with our communities in order to help keep them safe. I'd like to thank Kempston White Watch for producing this video and would encourage people to share this widely with family and friends."

The virtual lesson includes:

- Find out what Firefighters do
- Story time with 'Frances the Firefly'
- What to do if there is a fire - 'Get Out, Stay Out, Call 999'
- Test a smoke alarm
- What to do if you catch fire 'Stop, Drop and Roll'

Click [here](#) to watch the video.



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Caring

As I said at the beginning, these are strange times that we are all going through. I want to take this opportunity to say to all of you, from all of us at The Firs, we hope you are taking care of yourselves and that you and all your family remain safe and well. Hoping you all have a peaceful Easter.