

The Firs, Keeping in Touch!

Thursday 30th April 2020

The temporary replacement for our normal Newsletters

As we said in our first Keeping in Touch letter, these are strange times 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 will be continuing this term to carry on with a regular publication but during the period of this partial school closure, we will be writing a 'Keeping in Touch' letter every Thursday, rather than a fortnightly 'newsletter'.

Count on Me

Our very caring staff at The Firs wanted to do something to keep in touch and remind the children about the fun times we have together at The Firs.



Alanah Hamilton has done a brilliant job organising our very own video, to accompany the 'Count on Me' song that children have enjoyed singing so much in school, during singing assembly.

It has really been a great team effort and staff have been very creative and really enjoyed contributing all their individual parts and the result is a super and very uplifting Firs video. If you haven't seen it yet, there is a link below:

Please click here for [A Cheerful Message from The Firs](#)

Learning at Home

We hope that the Learning at Home packs have been a useful resource for you to help support your child's learning, while children are not in school.

We will be making a greater use of the many online resources now becoming available as time goes on, such as BBC Bitesize and Oak National Academy and we hope that this will continue to enhance the provision we are making for home learning.



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We have deliberately avoided sending home 'timetable guides' as for young children, we realise there can be a great variation in what sorts of routines work for different individuals. We would like to take this opportunity to say that we fully appreciate how difficult it can be for parents working at home with their children.

We have had some lovely feedback however, about how parents are sensibly choosing the activities from the Home Learning packs that work for their child in their situation (some doing more than others and working at a pace and in a way that suits individual children). We also love to hear about the way parents are blending this in with lovely 'life skill' work such as gardening, cooking, art and craft activities or getting exercise on the trampoline! etc.

We are very grateful for everything you are doing to support your child's learning at home.

As you will know, we have started our 'Keeping in Touch' programme now and the Focus Group 1 and 2 children's parents were contacted over the past two weeks. We will be sending out the Focus Group 3 emails on Monday. Please do respond to your child's class teacher, it's a great opportunity to share some of the great experiences you and your child(ren) have been having together and it's obviously really important that the class teachers get an idea about how your child is and how they are getting on with the Home Learning packs.

Thanks for your support.

Reading at home

We have had some requests from parents that we send reading books home. Whilst we understand the desire for this, we will not be able to provide this for children not in school during the partial closure.

Mrs Mercer sent out a letter to let you know however, that from Monday 20th April, RWI are streaming 7 Speed Sound Lessons, including Word Time and Spelling, for children to watch at home every weekday on their [YouTubeLink](#) (ctrl + click to follow link).

The letter also gave details about how to access a large quantity of ebooks and other reading resources. Please click on this link to access the [RWIPageOn OxfordOwl](#) (ctrl + click to follow link). You will need to register first and this is free!

The letter, giving more details about all this, is available on our website in the letters home section.

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In School Provision Update

Children who are attending our in school provision should be bringing their Home Learning Pack into school, so that we can use them to continue children's learning in school.

As regards reading books, again we have had parents asking if children who are part of our in school provision can change their books. Unfortunately, as we are running a skeleton staff, we will not always have the right staff in school, at the right time, to change all the books and due to social distancing, we will not be able to give parents access to the school / books to do this and so we will not be able to offer this provision at the moment.

Free School Meals and FSM Vouchers Update

We have been in touch with parents/carers of children who have 'benefit related' free school meals, regarding how the school is now administering the government voucher scheme.

We are distributing Waitrose gift cards, purchased using the DfE vouchers, to the eligible parents. A big thank you to Celia Bennett our Business Manager for organising this. If for any reason, you feel you are entitled but have not received your card, please contact the school.

Pictures for the NHS

Before Easter we invited all our children to send us pictures they had created to put up in their window, to celebrate and thank the NHS and to inspire others to maintain the lockdown measures.

Thank you to the many parents who have emailed their pictures. If you haven't yet, it's not too late... send your picture by the end of next week as we will then use them to put up our display in school. We will share pictures of the display with you and on our website.

Mental Health and Well Being

A very useful webpage is available, coordinated by CAMH that gives a selection of materials available online to support mental health and well being generally and during the lock down specifically. See link below:

<https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk>

Also see the pdf sent out with this letter - **'Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak'**

This will also be available both on the Coronavirus and letters home sections of our website.

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Home Learning Packs

As in previous weeks, the learning packs for next week will be emailed out on Friday and the requested printed versions will be available outside the school to be picked up between 8.45 - 15.30. These will be on labelled tables and we would ask that you adhere to the 2 metre social distancing rule.

We are standardising our labelling of the packs, so there is no confusion between them and which one we are on! Next week therefore, it will be Summer Week 3, for the week beginning 4/5/20.

We are finding that there are always more packs needed than are requested. **Please make sure that if you want to order a printed version, you complete the Google form** Mrs Ashby sends out on Wednesdays via email. This will then mean we don't have to keep

people waiting while we print more. It also reduces the amount of interaction needed, helping to support social distancing. Thank you for your support.

That's all for now, I hope these weekly updates will be useful going forward, both to keep you informed and to make sure you know that all our children and parents are very much in all our minds here at The Firs.

Take care everyone.

Adam Campbell
Headteacher

