



School Update 26/02/21

Dear Parents, Staff and Governors,

This week we have been beginning to prepare for the return of pupils on Monday 8th March. A detailed letter will follow next week but essentially the plan will be similar to the January one -which didn't actually happen due to the Lockdown coming into force 24 hours later!

To refresh our collective memories, the main change from the Autumn term was that we were going to stagger children arriving and leaving at the beginning and end of the school day. We were going to do this by house group so that siblings could be dropped off and picked up at the same time. The idea behind this was to ensure less congestion at these times – particularly at the end of the day when we have none of the advantages of our morning staggered 'soft start'. Indeed, in our recent parent survey, congestion at this time was something that came up a number of times in terms of parents' thoughts regarding children returning to school.

With infection rates still fairly high (though much lower than in December, especially locally) we believe that starting this way is a safer approach – which can always be modified as we go beyond Easter and through the summer term, if the situation with the pandemic improves.

We will also be starting back with packed lunches (either from home or from school) and children will come into school on PE days in their PE kits. We will still be allowing fleeces/warm clothing though as we seek to continue to ventilate our rooms as far as possible.

Full details will be put out next week.

Parent Survey

Many thanks to those of you who completed our parent survey – this was really useful in terms of hearing your views on our remote learning provision as well as your thoughts on the return back to school (which hadn't been fully confirmed at that point). A summary of the results follows:

289 responses were completed

1) Devices

98.5% have access to laptop/device

2) Preferred time to work

75% prefer their children to work between 9 and 1 pm falling to 50% in the early afternoon. 20% preferred the evening.

3) Connectivity

30% experience some loss of connectivity – about once a day and 4% experience it regularly.

4) Amount of Work / Screen Time

65% of children work between 2 and 4 hours a day and about 20% for more than 4 hours.

Only 2% of parents believe that their child doesn't receive enough work, with 71% saying they get enough and 27% too much.

46% feel that their children have too much screen time and 27% believe that it is too much to the point that they are concerned by it.

5) Useful Aspects of Remote Learning

Most useful aspects of remote learning were (adding the columns very useful and somewhat useful):

Seesaw 98%

Google Meets 94%

Teacher email 78%

Teacher updates 75%

6) Most useful aspects of Seesaw were (adding the columns very useful and somewhat useful)

Teacher videos 100%

Teacher worksheets 98%

Teacher responding on screen 98%

7) How are children coping? (adding the agree and strongly agree columns)

With the amount of work = 82%

With the home environment = 71%

Knows where to get wellbeing support = 86%

Knows how to stay safe online = 76% (NB. The survey went out, and most responses received were before our E-Safety week in the week before half term)

8) Communication

94% thought it was good or excellent

9) Suggestions

A desire for live lessons was mentioned in 15% of responses and one to one lessons in 3%

Overall, the response was very positive and lots of teams, individuals and aspects of remote learning were highlighted for praise in the free text sections, so thank you.

Our aims were to meet the features highlighted by both Ofsted and the Education Endowment Trust as being best practice for remote learning which were that the quality of work was more important than the method of delivery, that there was the facility for teachers to offer feedback and that there were some opportunities for social interaction.

Obviously it is impossible to meet everybody's expectations, ideas and personal circumstances with remote learning but we also aimed to ensure that the needs of children in a variety of family, work and social contexts could be met.

We feel that in many ways we met these and we are now looking at both our pupil and staff surveys as well, to decide what we would keep, improve, start and stop if there was a further Lockdown or even bubble closures in the future.

World Book Day

Next Thursday, 4th March is World Book Day and over the next week there will be a number of book related activities for the children to do. On the Thursday itself (whether at home or school) children can if they wish either have an object/item of clothing that represents a book – or wear a costume. We have tried to keep it as easy as possible as we know that everybody has enough pressures to contend with at the moment without adding to them!

Alban Academies Trust

I just wanted to update you that due to the Lockdown over this term our membership of the Alban Academies Trust has now been postponed until September.

Mrs Merridan

Linda Merridan, our Office Manager, will be retiring at the end of this term after 15 years working at Garden Fields, with much further service before that with Herts CC. We are devastated to lose such a well-loved member of our staff team and just wanted to inform parents as so many of you will have spoken to Mrs Merridan over the years whether by phone or in person 'at the hatch'. Although we will be very sorry to lose Mrs Merridan, it is now a lovely opportunity for her to relax from all the hard work that she has put into the school over the years!

That just leaves me to wish you all a good weekend – let's hope that this morning's bright weather can continue and that I haven't cursed it by singing Mr Blue Sky in assembly today!

Best wishes,

Mr Farrugia