



Our Lady & St Thomas Primary School



You are unique, talented and loved by God

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Newsletter - 12th January 2021

Dear Parents,

We have all survived week one of the new term and I wish to thank all our families for your kind comments, supportive messages and good wishes as we once again work under National Lockdown Restrictions.

National Context

Schools have been at the forefront of political debate and the news headlines for a number of weeks now and have had to contend with an inordinate amount of new DFE Guidance, expectations and updates. Responding to this has been extremely challenging given the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in.

All schools have been mandated by the DFE to ensure high quality Remote Learning Provision. This is born out of the varying experiences children had nationwide during the previous lockdown. There are now new expectations for all schools to adhere to, which has been less publicised. Schools are expected to ensure that all pupils have daily access to Remote Learning - three hours in KS1 and four hours in KS2. I wish to address this as we are acutely aware of the pressures this places on parents and families as well as our wonderful children.



Our Lady and St Thomas Response

It is more important than ever for our school community to pull together for the safety and well-being of all our children.

We have approximately 40% of pupils who have accessed a vulnerable or key worker place in school and staff are splitting their time by either teaching face to face or online remotely. Our bubbles are larger to try and accommodate the situation many schools find themselves in. As I have said previously, even if you are critical worker, please keep your child at home when you are able to do so and only use the school place when you have no other options.

ALL learning is the same whether children are on-site or working from home. We are constantly reviewing our online provision and improving what OLST can offer. I have been delighted with the engagement of all pupils so far with 88% of our home learners accessing the Google Classroom.

Access to technology is imperative as with the Google Classroom there is scope for live teaching, daily interactions with the teacher as well as videos and daily lessons. There is also the social aspect for mental health and well-being with the chat facility and Google Meet with their friends. We have been able to

support families really struggling due to lack of devices and are looking into helping to increase mobile data allowances and access to the Internet. We are working our way through the list of families from the information you provided to Mrs Frame. Our new Google Forms is a great way of gathering information quickly from parents.

New Arrangements for those in School

Due to the numbers we have in school, I have risk assessed the hot spots of our day and made some changes to limit parents gathering. All pupils in school should arrive between 8.45-9am. This 15 minute window will allow parents flexibility. We have staggered the end of the day which is the most problematic as follows:

	Drop off & Pick up	Time
Bubble 1 (Class 1)	Class 1 door	2.50pm
Family Groups/ Childminder	Main Entrance	2.50pm
Bubble 2 (Class 2 and 3)	Main drive way	3.00pm
Bubble 3 (Class 4 and 5)	Class 5 door and side gate	3.10pm

We would ask that at pick up time especially, you use the one way system and leave the site as promptly as possible as we will have more parents arriving and wish to avoid the bottleneck on the drive.

Google Classroom and Expectations

OLST continues to have high expectations of all our children with their work, attitude to learning and behaviour. You will have all noticed a marked increase in tasks and learning materials on the Google Classroom in response to the Government expectation. I wanted all parents to understand why this is the case however this does not mean that it must all be done every day.

We are all facing difficult weeks ahead with many of you trying to juggle full time work whilst home schooling. This should not be stressful for you or your child. There is the danger, as we are human, to always feel that you are not doing enough, guilty for having to work or inferior as someone else has done much more than you. Many of our families are experiencing hardships and school does not want to add any further pressure to anyone. All staff have produced an example timetable of a day but again this is just a guide for anyone that finds it useful. We know that some families are sharing devices, some access Remote Learning at the beginning of the day, some at the end, some complete one or two tasks, some use paper packs.

All of this is good enough!

I want you all to know that whatever you manage to do or not do – is good enough! A little is better than nothing but the most important thing you can do for your child is love them and be there for them after all their routines, school life, access to friends and play dates, clubs and seeing family has all been turned upside down again. We must all be kind to ourselves.

OLST will ensure there is enough material on the Google Classroom to meet external requirements. This will generally involve an English and Maths lesson for the morning session and one or two tasks for the afternoon session which are lighter.

We will be using a blended approach as we know we cannot expect all children to log on at 9am and be taught remotely. Family life does not work like that nor does it work with our youngest. We are developing with our test class (Mrs Pearson) Google Meet sessions that your child can drop into where

they can have their tasks explained and receive feedback. Your class teacher will let you know when they are scheduled with a view to doing this twice daily at registration points.

No child will fall behind as all children are in exactly the same position and as exams have been cancelled for Year 6, we will be able to spend the rest of the year ensuring all children receive Education tailored to their individual needs to prepare them for their next steps. We have an amazing staff who will ensure your child gets exactly what they need and I wish to thank them all formally for once again rising to the challenges and overcoming each obstacle that presents itself. We are all on this very steep learning journey together and will support you all every step of the way.

Finally, a thought to leave you with



Stay safe everyone.

Mrs Veitch and all the staff at OLST