

St. Michael's CE Primary School

29th January 2021



Parent Update

Offer from James Haywood Estate Agents

This week, I received this lovely offer from James Hayward (a local estate agent on Chase Side).

Watching the News and learning how some families are struggling with home schooling and lack of equipment, it occurred to us at James Hayward, that we may be able to help our local schools and in addition, take some of the stress away from parents in need.

We would like to offer a "printing" service, for those families who do not own a printer, or who may have run out of ink at the last moment but need homework/information run off urgently.

All they would need to do is email us Monday to Friday (dee@james-hayward.com), with their name and the name of their school as a reference, attach the required info/homework, which we would then print off for them, ready to be collected.

We want to help our local community.

This is extremely generous of them and, on behalf of all our parents and children, I would like to say a big 'thank you'!

Big Assembly this week

Big Assembly, this week, will be on Friday. If children have a class lesson at that time (10am), it is more important that they go to their lesson instead. Otherwise, it will be lovely to see anyone that would like to come along. Remember, the free version of Zoom only allows 100 participants, so it is possible that some won't be able to get in - sorry!

Get your singing voice out and your dancing shoes on for:

Jan Matthews' Big Assembly

Time: Feb 5, 2021 10:00 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/94336724410?pwd=ZXFSREp3SFJKSzlFK2xxa21jT25YUT09>

Meeting ID: 943 3672 4410

Passcode: Ujip58

Free Online Course for Parents and Carers

Please find attached details of a free online two-part workshop for Parents and Carers of children aged 5-10 who live in or attend school in Enfield taking place on Tuesday 2nd and 16th February at 8pm-9pm.

Parents and Carers of children are invited to book a place by e-mailing eps-sews@enfield.gov.uk providing the name of the school that their child attends.

Free Advice from Citizens' Advice Bureau

Please find attached a flyer from Citizens' Advice about support for all kinds of issues around this current pandemic. There is a 'Life After Loss' programme of support that could particularly be useful for anyone that has recently been bereaved.

Using the Year@ or the Replyto@ email addresses.

If you have sent an email to the school, please just assume that all emails are received. Just recently, we have had a flurry of parents writing a second email to ask if the first email has been received. Often, SLT or office staff are receiving and sending up to three or four emails about one thing. Multiply that by 400 children and you can see why the office gets overwhelmed.

If your email really needs a reply and you don't receive one within five working days, then it might be a good idea to check again. It really helps to keep all emails and replies on the same subject as part of one long email conversation and to put your child/ren's name/s and class/es in the subject line.

Live Lessons

When your child attends any form of live lesson, please ensure that their **first name only** is displayed clearly on the screen.* In the case of there being two children with the same first name, just use the first initial of the second name. Do not use surnames and do not use nicknames (of children or parents). I'm sure that 'Bustybunny34**' is proud of his/her screen name but it's not quite right for lessons.

* For data protection and child protection reasons

** Not a screen name from our school, but a real example nonetheless

Year Six Residential at Kingswood

If you have replied to the replyto@ email address to say that you would like your child go on this trip, please note that your child will be on the final list on receipt of your first deposit of £40 due this Thursday, 4th February.

Key Worker and Vulnerable Children Places in School

We now have over 33% of children in school. Years One, Two and Three are already over numbers with other year groups at or nearing capacity. Places at school are based on need, not 'first come first served'.

In the first instance, I need to ask parents who have a place, and who possibly can, to volunteer to keep their children at home for some more days each week. After that, I will ask families with only one critical worker parent to reduce their number of days in school. If it becomes absolutely necessary, we may have to reduce numbers by prioritising families with two critical workers, both of whom who cannot possibly work from home (including but not exclusively: NHS staff, refuse collectors, supermarket workers, bus drivers, undertakers etc.). I do understand that it is really hard to have children at home whilst trying to work, indeed, most of our staff are in the same position of helping their own children at home whilst they are teaching on line or preparing lessons.

I am aware that there are one or two families who have not sent in their evidence of key worker status this lockdown. You do not need to write and ask, you will know if you have sent it by checking your own email records. If you have not sent it, please do not be offended if we write to you withdrawing your keyworker place.

We need to reduce numbers for two main reasons. The first is to do with the reasons the schools are partially closed to start with i.e. to reduce transmission rates in the community. The more children in school, the higher the chance of children being in school whilst asymptomatic and spreading the virus to others who could, asymptotically take it home and pass it on to family member and contacts.

The second reason is to ensure that remote learning can continue. If we have to open a second bubble because of high numbers in school, then we will have no-one to plan and deliver online learning.

Interventions

Some children, for all sorts of reasons are asked to attend online interventions with teachers, TAs or SEN TAs. Please do not share links for these with other families. Just like medicine prescribed by the doctor, certain interventions are for certain children for certain reasons. The attendees for these sessions is decided by staff not by parents.

I have asked staff to close down any attendees that should not be there.

Lockdown: Weekly Phone Calls

I have had several teachers approach me to ask if they can cut phone calls to children from weekly to fortnightly. The purpose of the phone calls is to speak to the children about how they are doing with their work and how they are feeling. Some teachers are telling me that sometimes parents hijack the phone calls, they take a long time and, sometimes, teachers don't even get to speak with the children. It is fine to ask schoolwork related questions, especially when you don't understand the 'new' way of doing division or such like but, on the whole, remember that the phone calls are for the children. I would prefer that teachers kept in touch weekly, but I do have to keep their workload manageable.

On this subject, please be aware that it could be any member of the year group team that calls. Teachers will not be calling back if a parent refuses to speak to the person that calls and, in that case, it is only the child that misses out. Every member of the year group team knows all the children very well. The only possible exception to this is Year One children who do not yet know Mrs Farrell very well.

Remote Learning: Keeping Good Routines During the School Week

Rather predictably, the longer lockdown has gone on, the more we hear parents talking about how their children won't listen to them, won't leave their electronic games or TV or just generally play up. Sometimes, it's tempting to think that the automatic answer is that they should come into school. Sometimes parents think that teachers have some kind of mysterious, magical power over children - just one look and children do what they are told! Much as we wish that this was true, it's not. What we do have on our side is routine, expectation and utter, boring, relentless consistency.

I have gathered together a few tips in the hope of supporting parents to support the apples of their eyes whilst learning at home. Some of it may be useful, some (or all) of it may not.

Don't collapse in a guilty heap

Do everything you can to help your child but don't feel guilty about the things you can't do. Remember, most teachers are trying to educate their own children at home at the same time as planning, preparing and delivering online learning. They know that feeling of guilt at having to put work first sometimes. Their children have tantrums and squabble amongst themselves; their toddlers spill drinks over the laptop and their teenagers need a bomb to get them out of bed. They know what it is like and they are not going to blame you. All you can do is your best ... no more.

Let your child's year team know if you just couldn't do something or you decided to do something in a completely different way, instead.

Bedtimes

Don't let bedtimes get later and later because the morning rush isn't quite as rushed as it used to be. There are three main reasons for keeping a 'school day' routine.

- As parents, you need a good few hours in the evening to talk about adult things / phone your friends / have nice bubble bath / watch something other than Cbeebies or even relax with a glass of something cool and refreshing.
- Your child's brain needs sleep to replenish itself and grow
- Your child needs a routine that separates the weekday from the weekend.

Getting Up in the Morning

If you are finding that your (usually, older Junior child) wants to sleep until 10 or 11 o'clock, chances are that they (with or without your knowledge) are playing games until late at night - quite likely, well after you have told them to switch off and go to sleep. It is worth setting clear getting up times for weekdays. Tempting though it is to enjoy that first cup of coffee in the peace and quiet, children should be in the habit of getting up, having breakfast and starting work.

Exercise

Make sure that children get plenty of exercise. Teachers are setting PE activities but, above and beyond this, children should have at least half an hour a day when they are getting out of breath (run up and down the hills at Hilly Fields / trampoline jumping / up and down the stairs of the flats/ go for a brisk walk/ football in the garden / dance to a video etc.). This will not only keep them more alert for their school work but will help you to get them to bed in the evening.

No means no

Consistency is the key. If you say no to something, stick with it no matter how much whining there is. It's easy to give in for a quiet life but the problem is that, although it gives a quiet life now, it stores up weeks of trouble ahead.

- State what you want your child to do and don't get involved in negotiations. Don't get me wrong, negotiation is a great skill to have, but there are times and places for all things.
- Use the 'broken record approach'. If you really want your child to do/not do something, stick to the script: 'I have asked you to ...' / 'We can talk about that after you have ...' / 'Remember, first you need to ...'. Don't get cross, don't feel bad, don't give any hint that you might give in or negotiate, don't get involved in other conversations - just keep repeating the instruction. Remember though, if your child is used to you giving in, it could take quite a while, but it will really will save your sanity later on.

Promote a 'working mind-set' in children

Use this time to teach children about the world of work and self-motivation.

- Some parents encourage children to dress in their school uniform because, just like putting on work clothes, it changes how you feel about yourself.
- Turn up to meetings on time
- Organise a timetable for the day and tick things off when they are done
- Promote resilience:
 - get children to have a go at something for a set (age related) length of time before they ask for help or say they can't do it. If you step in immediately, children will

never learn to problem solve. A good rule of thumb is their age plus 2 minutes i.e. 5 years old = 7mins / 11 years old = 13 mins). Chances are that the child will have had a good go before you go to check up on them. Remember: the teachers know what the children can and can't do. They won't set work that is completely beyond any of the children.

- Encourage children to speak up and contribute to live lessons. Children that speak up happily at school will sometimes take a step back either because they want their parent to do the talking for them or because they don't want their parent to see them take a chance on getting something wrong. Encourage children to contribute in the same way as they would in class. Praise them for having a go.

Help Your Child to Develop Life Skills

To promote a sense of achievement as well as develop life skills, as part of their daily routine, make sure your child:

- Makes their own bed
- Puts dirty washing in the basket
- Fills up their own water bottle for the day
- Helps to make their own lunch
- Wipes down surfaces after making a mess
- Small children should be able to help with washing up, drying and putting away
- All Juniors from Year Four up should know the best, most efficient way to load the dishwasher - if you have one - and be able to empty it and put everything away.

Set targets for this lockdown:

By the end of this lockdown

- Every child from Reception up should be able to butter their own bread and make a sandwich
- Every Junior should be able to make two healthy evening meals
- Year Five and Six should be able to make two healthy evening meals from scratch

Try keeping a daily record and let your child's class teacher know when they are doing these things as a matter of course. When school starts up normally again, there will be some prizes for life skills. We might even make up a recipe book for children to share the two recipes (and photos) they have learned over lockdown.

Not only will your child develop life skills, you might get a bit of a break as well and their future wives, husbands and partners will thank you for it 😊

What If It Snows?

We don't get much snow in the South East but it is forecast over the next few days. Any family that wants to has my permission to go out in the garden or to Hilly Fields and slide down hills, make snowmen and have snowball fights. Just be careful to keep to your own household bubbles - we don't want schools closed for an extra month or two because of fun in the fields. Try to keep up with recorded lessons if you can, but you have to make the most of snow while it is there. I will make sure that the teachers understand 😊