



January 26, 2021

Blackminster Middle School

School Bulletin

Bulletin 26-01-21

Dear parents and carers,

It's hard to believe that we are already starting our fourth week of lockdown and remote learning. We are incredibly proud of how well students are adapting to the situation, and teachers are telling me about some wonderful work being completed and learning achieved. I'd like to thank you, our students' wonderful parents and carers, for all the support you are giving them, and us as a school, over this very challenging time.

This newsletter contains a round-up of lots of information, which I hope will be useful to you.

Support for remote learning

Consistent routines can be a struggle at home with changes to our home working and learning. We've released a "whole school assembly" on Show My Homework this week that aims to help with some of the mental health aspects of lockdown, and will be releasing another about how best to tackle the learning activities. The link below is to a video produced by the Education Endowment Foundation that aims to support parents in developing good routines around home learning. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO9SDGRgi3c&feature=youtu.be>

The Education Endowment Foundation have produced a checklist which you might also find helpful to discuss with your son or daughter.

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19 Resources/Resources for parents/Supporting home learning routines - Planning the day.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19%20Resources/Resources%20for%20parents/Supporting%20home%20learning%20routines%20-%20Planning%20the%20day.pdf)

The BBC is producing lots of content during lockdown that might be useful for families – it will give a break from online lessons whilst still keeping students learning! The schedules are available here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zvryp4j>

Oak National Academy, partnership with the National Literacy Trust, has started the Virtual School Library. Each week a free eBook by a popular author and related activities will be available. Follow the link for more details.

<https://library.thenational.academy/>

SumDog

Please do encourage your child to log in to SumDog. They can get their login details from Mrs Pitkeathly – just drop her an email or a message on SMHW. Please note that your child will need to contact her personally – she can't post the passwords on public discussions because they are unique to each student. This site can be helpful as it provides lots of challenge and is calibrated to each user's level so is neither too easy nor too hard. The competition aspect is often motivational for students too.

Caring Hands in the Vale

Caring Hands have sent me a copy of their new resources List as at January 2021. There are a few things that may be of interest to our families. Please do contact me, in confidence, if you need support with food or other essentials during this time.

Also, many parents will be aware that, for some time now, we have been providing sanitary protection in school for any young woman who needs it. If you need supplies over lockdown, please contact me in confidence and we will supply.

FAQs

In my letter of January 8th I gave a list of FAQs. Here is an updated version of those questions.

We're very confused about remote learning!

As from Monday 11th January, all work has been appearing on SMHW on the day that students would normally have had that lesson timetabled, and is shown as "classwork", "Test" or "quiz".

Instructions were sent out on Monday 11th January – if you need those again please contact your child's tutor.

Students should also be reading each day for at least 20 minutes - Accelerated Reader is still running!

How can my child submit work?

This is now easier to do through SMHW. In addition, children can email teachers, message through SMHW, send photos... whatever works best for them!

How will work get marked?

Teachers will be providing feedback on work just as we do in more normal times. This won't be every piece of work, but will be regular and will give your child targets for how to improve. Feedback might be sent by email, SMHW message, it might be automatically generated by quizzes on line - we'll use a variety of methods to suit different subjects and pieces of work.

What if my child needs help?

Contact the teacher. Teachers are working from home, and are available to answer questions and provide help when necessary. Don't feel like you're bothering us - we're here to help!

I just feel overwhelmed with it all...

Give us a call or drop an email to your child's tutor. We're here and keen to support you as much as we can. Some of the resources listed at the top of this newsletter might also be helpful for you or your child. Work is set in accordance with what students would normally be doing in school, so should be taking them roughly 4-5 hours per day. If your child is doing much more or much less than this, please contact their tutor for advice, or leave a message for the teacher on SMHW.

I haven't got the resources!

Contact us, and we'll offer whatever we can.

Are you doing live lessons?

When we surveyed parents and carers in September, we found that lots of families don't have lots of internet access, or that they will be working from home themselves, or that more than one child will be sharing a computer. It's important that the remote learning we provide is flexible so that it fits in around all of these things, and that it's manageable for parents who might be working at home themselves. That's why our remote learning package is as flexible as possible. Having said that, we have had feedback that parents and children would appreciate more personal contact. We're therefore doing live tutor times each week (and we'd love to

know if you'd like more of these), and also planning to bring more of our own teachers into the offering by means of voice-overs or other presentations and explanations. We hope that this will keep the all-important connection between students and teachers, but maintain the flexibility around remote education that many families need. As always, we'd love your feedback on how these changes are working for your child and you. Please remember too that teachers are working – if you'd like to speak to one of us please email or phone school and someone will call you back when they can.

Do we have to stick to the timetable?

No. Work is set according to the timetable so that children can manage their work, but if your child wants to do the lessons in a different order or at a different time of day that's completely fine.

We can't log in to Accelerated Reader

Use the link that is posted in SMHW - that will get you in to the school's account. If you still have problems, please contact Mrs Baldwin - cbaldwin@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk

Can I send my child to school?

The reason that schools are closed to most students is to reduce contacts and therefore break transmission of coronavirus. We have rigorous risk assessments in place and school is as safe as possible, but children who can stay at home and avoid mixing with others are less likely to catch or transmit COVID-19. We are open for vulnerable children and to provide child care for critical workers who need to be at work and who therefore cannot supervise their child's remote education, and we're proud and delighted to provide this service, but it's important to keep the numbers of staff and children on site as low as possible. If, however, you would like to discuss your child's attendance at school, please do contact us.

Staff emails

Staff are working remotely, and students and parents are able to contact us by Show My Homework message or by email. Please be aware that emails go into "quarantine" overnight, so may not be seen by teachers until the next day. Teachers will respond during normal working hours. Email addresses all take the same form – FirstInitialFamilyName@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk. For example, I'm Linda McQuone so mine is lmcquone@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk.

Please do remember to check out our Facebook page for more news and celebrations of our wonderful students. This is a hard time for our community, indeed for the whole of the UK, but

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I have every confidence that our staff, students and families will continue to do the best we can until we can be together again in person. Let's hope that time is not too far away.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda McQuone". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and a small circle at the end.

Linda McQuone

Acting Executive Headteacher