

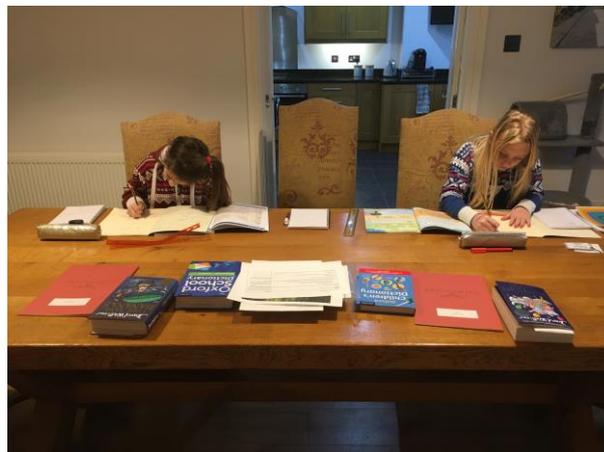
Ickford News

In this, the first Newsletter of the Spring term, I would normally be welcoming everyone back after Christmas and sending best wishes for a New Year. I doubt that at this time last year, anyone would have predicted the situation we find ourselves in. Let's hope (and, if you have a faith, pray) it will not last much longer.

I am thankful that we had always timetabled an INSET day at the start of this term. It was originally intended to give some of you that little more time to get home from holidays or visiting relatives instead it proved crucial in enabling us to change plans at the last minute and meant that we avoided having children in for one day only to be evacuated the next.

This week has been busy and a little intense but not unenjoyable. We have all pulled together quickly and, perhaps abnormally, I enjoy the challenge and the demands of adverse circumstances. I will go home later on satisfied that a great deal has been achieved this week and that we have given our best efforts in doing so.

I recognise that it has been very difficult for many families to adjust to the 'home schooling' again but, as I said earlier in the week, I am convinced that our approach is the best for the children and for our families. It has been good to deal with any teething problems directly and also a delight to hear about plenty of early successes. I have received some lovely pictures and love this one of two Class 4 girls diligently getting stuck into their tasks although I apologise as I imagine some of you may not be finding it such a serene experience! I particularly enjoy the fact that there is not a computer, lap top, tablet or mobile phone in sight. Well done girls for making the most of the opportunity to demonstrate our value of determination.



During this second school closure, it has been more difficult to remain open in order to allow the children of Key Workers to come to school and I want to thank you all for your patience and understanding.

It has not been easy to compile a list of those entitled to a school place and I recognise that some of you may not be happy. Unfortunately, this is a nationwide picture and all schools have seen an increase in the demand for Key Worker places. We now have 22% of our children coming into school for the whole or part of the week which, although wonderful, does mean that I have to rely on the support of more staff and their willingness to come to work at a time when Unions are advising them not to. It is vital that we all pay heed to the warnings and follow the government guidelines to the letter if we are to keep everyone healthy and remain open.

On a lighter note, I chuckled at another local school's recent contribution to the Bernwode News. Pictures of their teachers and a brief synopsis of their interests. I imagine this is part of an advertising campaign to attract parents to the school at this time when the school applications deadline is looming. I am not sure the team here would appreciate such exposure! Being unable to show any potential new parents around has been a problem this year and I am not sure how it will impact on the number of applications for places in September. In recent years, we have been quite significantly oversubscribed but I have relied on the fact that I have been able to

carry out individual school tours personally. I am going to have to trust to your ability to share word of mouth recommendation and having a good reputation. Perhaps, I should ask Mme Basnett (the original and by far the best) to do a press conference for the local rag or allow Hello magazine into her palatial home!

If all else fails:



In spite of obvious challenges this week, rest assured we have not stopped trying to improve. I have been successful in streamlining our procedures for safeguarding children and we have been carrying out work to support children who find aspects of the curriculum difficult. We have also continued with work on improving the recording and reporting of children's progress and I hope to announce some changes soon.

Thank you to everyone for your support. Please get in touch with me directly if you have any problems with the home learning or if you are struggling to download or print any resources. I am determined to try and find solutions and I am determined to ensure that Ickford remains the best choice of school.

Have a good weekend.

Mr Ronane

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