



November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to make you aware of our plans between now and the end of this term.

I want the remaining weeks of this term to prepare us all for a safe and enjoyable Christmas holiday and a successful new year back in school.

The short version of the plan is as follows.

In the last week of term all our children at St Matthias will have all their lessons taught to them remotely at home.

There are a number of reasons why I think this is a good idea. It might not be obvious why.

The main reason is that we need to make sure we can teach all our children remotely. This is not only a requirement the government has insisted upon but also something I suspect we might need in the new year.

We have chosen to use the Microsoft package called Microsoft Teams to make home learning work. Those of you who have needed to isolate your child already will know that getting Microsoft Teams to work properly can be difficult. Like any complex IT project there will be problems and glitches that need to be sorted out.

The plan is to use the last five days of term to sort everything out. The new year could be challenging so having Microsoft Teams working properly will help. Every lesson will go ahead, just remotely.

Another reason relates to staffing and isolation for children and adults.

Some schools are closed or putting whole year groups out. This is something we have been able to safely avoid. I want to keep our school open to as many children as possible. If a child or adult gets a positive test during the last week of term all those in close contact will be required to isolate through the Christmas period. The thought of contacting families and informing them to isolate is not something I want to do. It will wreck Christmas.

If home learning works well it will give us options through the rest of the winter. If we have an outbreak, we can be confident that learning will not suffer too much.

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LOOK UP

Three last things for now:

1. Thursday 10th and Friday 11th December will be training days in school. We need these days to finalise our Microsoft Teams training and resolve some other staff training issues.

This means for the majority of children Wednesday 9th December will be their last day of education in school before Christmas.

2. If you believe it is not possible for your child to learn from home in the last week then please let us know as soon as possible. We can make arrangements for children who cannot be at home for supervision and safety reasons. I imagine this will be the case for some children.
3. If your child receives free school meals and previously vouchers during the holiday the following provision is in place. If you would like your child to collect a packed lunch during the last home learning week of term please let us know and we will ensure there is a lunch waiting for them at school each day. If you do not inform us, we will assume the packed lunch is not wanted. The holiday provision will no longer be organised by us but through the local authority. As soon as I know how they are organising free school meals I will let you know. I think they are delivering food parcels, but I could be wrong.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get these to us in writing or over the phone. Please avoid coming into school if you can.

Thanks again for all your support. I think our children have done a good job coping with everything, perhaps better than us adults have. We look forward to better days soon but until then everyone at St Matthias wishes you the best Christmas break possible.

We will be open and ready for term two on January 4th 2021.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a vertical line, positioned above the name Dean Coombes.

Dean Coombes
Head Teacher