

News from Mr Edwards-Grundy

This is not the start of term that any of us had in mind; it is not even the start of term that we spent Monday in school planning for... For all of us, this week has been another huge period of readjustment and change, of increased anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

And yet, against that backdrop, in school our Value is Hope. The Christian message of hope speaks into the turbulence of these days and encourages us to see something different from the challenges of our circumstance. The Christian message of hope is not about wishful thinking, it is not even about "if everything goes according to plan", it is about certainty. Christian hope is that if we live the values that Jesus set out and put our faith in him, then this will bring blessing on both ourselves and others.

Covid-19 is without a doubt a challenge bigger than any of us could have dreamt that we would have to go through. It is however my belief that if we continue to hold to our values, if we are kind to one another and if we look beyond ourselves, this experience will make us better, will build community and make our faith stronger.

In school, it is our great privilege to be able to support the children of our key workers. We are enormously grateful to those working on the front line, making sacrifices on our behalf. I would like however to encourage everyone that, at this time, we want as few children in school as possible, in order that we can have everyone back in school as quickly as possible. Whenever you can, please keep your children at home. We are all longing for the day when we are all back together again.

Admissions for September 2021

The deadline for all those who want a place in Reception in September 2021 is fast approaching (15th January 2021).

If your child wants a place, don't forget to apply by that deadline. If you know anyone who might like a place, do encourage them to watch our [Welcome to the School](#) video that can be accessed via the website.

Welcome to The Blake School

This week, staff and children have welcomed Mr Andy Verschoyle into school. Mr Verschoyle is working in Year 5, alongside Mrs Raven, to replace Mrs Doland. Mr Verschoyle will be working on a Monday, Tuesday and a Friday, Mrs Raven on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

We asked Mr Verschoyle to tell us a bit about himself. He told us that he is a keen cyclist and has cycled up a lot of mountains. He also told us that he has sailed across the Atlantic!



Mr Verschoyle is already settling well into the school and told us that it has been great getting to know the children in Year 5. Today he has been learning how to play 4-square and when we caught up with him he was joining the children in some art work.

The Year 5 children all had the chance to meet Mr Verschoyle prior to the Christmas holidays. Those children who are at home will be meeting Mr Verschoyle remotely during next week.

At the moment Mr Verschoyle's email is still being set up, so if you want to contact him, please copy Mrs Raven into the email too! For this coming week they will both be using the same account.

News from around the school

With the move to remote learning and schools only able to welcome a small number of children into the school building, more of you than ever are needing to contact our school admin team.

We thought you may like to put a face to the names of the people who are answering your telephone calls and emails. We also wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you to the admin team for all of the additional work that they are picking up at this time.



Teresa Shillam is our School Business Manager. Teresa deals with all things finance and makes sure bills are paid and the books balance. Teresa also monitors health and safety.



Julie Hitchman is responsible for all matters relating to admissions and attendance. Julie also manages ParentPay and monitors school lunch provision, as well as being the expert on our data management system.

Claire Hurley balances her admin role with being a Teaching Assistant. Claire is responsible for placing orders and managing supplies, she is also often the face of welcome.



Liz Hayes is often the first person to respond to your emails, she is also likely to be the person who speaks to you on the telephone. This week Liz has been busy sending emails out to every family with your log in details.



Ruth Lockwood's role is spread across the admin team, she may pick up the phone, answer your emails or meet you at the hatch. Ruth has an overview of communication across the school and also deals with staff HR and personnel issues.

The admin team wanted to express their thanks to the parent community for their kind words this week in particular and for bearing with them as they have battled some technical gremlins.

Information for those in school

The government today updated its guidance regarding places in school for children of key workers. The guidance is now explicit that children should only be in school "where it is not possible for them to be cared for at home." Over the weekend, please do consider whether, for the safety of everyone, when you are able to keep your children at home, rather than sending them into school.

If your child is in school, hot meals will continue to be available to them, please see the [menu](#) on our website.

Please also make sure your child has a PE kit in school, which includes something to keep them warm!

St Mary's Church, Cogges

Our churches remain open during lockdown, they can provide a quiet space for reflection on your daily walk.

If you want to find out more about what St Mary's Cogges are doing at this time, do please look on their [website](#).

You can also watch services that are being [provided nationally](#). On the Church of England website there are also a number of other resources that you may find helpful at this time.

Remote learning

Teachers have been busy this week setting up Teams so that your children can access meetings with their teachers and also access and share work.

In line with our safeguarding procedures, all sessions on Teams will be recorded. Please do bear in mind that if you are 'in shot, or in earshot', you will also be recorded.

We believe that Teams will be a great resource, but we are aware that this is new technology for everyone and there is lots to learn. Please bear with us through next week as we all explore this new technology together – it will get easier.

We have uploaded some useful material to our [school website](#) to help you explore Teams – please do have a play over the weekend.

If you have had an email and the email/password appears to be missing, please can we ask that you open the email in the e-schools app, you should be able to see all the details via that app.

If you have tried to log into Teams today you may have been asked for a code. It should be that once class teachers have added emails to Teams, you are no longer asked for this.

If you continue to have any problems with accessing Teams, please do email Liz Hayes – ehayes@blake.oxon.sch.uk and she will get back to you.

Remember, in the weeks ahead the most important thing remains the health and wellbeing of you and your children. Remote learning will look different for all of you, it is not a competition. Family time, enjoying activities together and walks in the fresh air are really important – **please make time for these.**

Quiz corner

What or who is the link between these things – cauliflower curry, navy blue and France?

How many words can you make from the word 'lockdown'?

What is the most common colour of car parked in the staff car park?

Staying positive

The [BBC](#) has produced some materials to help people stay positive through the lockdown. You can find out more on their website, but the headlines are –

1. Get moving
2. Stop over-thinking
3. Set a new target
4. Talk it over
5. Do it badly!

We think the material is really helpful in encouraging us to be gentle with ourselves at this challenging time.

Additional support

If you feel that you, or any member of your family, is in need of some additional support, please do reach out to professional organisations that can provide advice or resources specific to your need.

[Family Lives](#) – 0808 800 222. Family support for all challenges and issues experienced as a family.

[Young Minds](#) – 0808 802 5544 Supporting children's mental health.

[Oxfordshire Mind](#) – 01865 247788 Supporting mental health across the age ranges.

[Childline](#) – 0800 1111 Support for young people.

[Domestic Violence Helpline](#) – 0808 2000 247

[Samaritans](#) – 116 123 If you need to talk.

[MASH \(Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub\)](#) – 0345 050 7666 For advice regarding concerns about a child.

West Witney Food Bank – 01993 890000

In an emergency always dial 999.

Mr Edwards-Grundy is the safeguarding lead in school, you can continue to contact him if you have any concerns about a child's safety or welfare.