



31st December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you and your families have been enjoying the Christmas break. There has been much media speculation throughout the holidays about schools opening in January. Today, the Minister for Education has announced some changes to the arrangements for opening schools in January 2021. While announcements were made on the news and via media outlets this morning, schools did not receive guidance from the Department until later this evening. We wanted to wait for the official guidance before advising parents of arrangements for January.

The Minister has stated that (at present):

- Nursery units will remain open as usual;
- Primary school pupils will be taught remotely until 8th January, after which they will attend school for face to face teaching;
- Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term;
- Childcare provision including those settings that are located on school premises to be open as usual.

For Whitehouse Primary School and Nursery Unit this means:

- Nursery will open as planned on Wednesday 6th January.
- Primary teaching will move to online learning for Wednesday 6th – Friday 8th January (see below).
- Parents will be contacted when staff return next week with an online form to determine which children are classed as vulnerable or children of key workers whose parents wish for them to attend school at this time. As stated by the DE – children attending school will be receiving ‘supervision’ not face to face teaching to ensure there is no discrimination between those attending and those learning at home. Further information will be sent to parents who are Key Workers when we have more guidance and an idea of numbers.
- **There will be no breakfast club until further notice.**
- Fox’s Den may be able to run as normal for after school provision but this is dependent on numbers. Please contact Sinead directly if you require after school provision.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I access the online learning?

- Access the school website at <http://www.whitehouseps.co.uk/> Click on the Home Learning tab. Enter the access password that was previously sent by text. (A reminder text will be sent next week) Click on your child’s year group. All home learning resources will be in the folders which you should click to open.
- Alternatively watch the video on the link below for illustrated step-by-step guidelines.
<http://www.whitehouseps.co.uk/news/a-guide-to-using-home-learning/>
- **If you have no method of connecting to the internet at home, please email your child’s teacher IMMEDIATELY who will arrange to print off a learning pack for your child.** This can be collected from school on Thursday. If a pack is requested but not collected, another pack will not be provided.

Documents containing Frequently Asked Questions about home learning and email guidelines have been attached to this email. Please read these carefully, as they contain all the information you will need. If you require additional support you can email your child’s teacher next week who will be happy to assist you.

How do I register my child to attend if I am a Key Worker?

A link to an online google form will be sent to you by text, next week, once staff are back at work. We are awaiting further guidance from the Department regarding this.

What if my child is entitled to Free School Meals?

It has been announced that one direct payment will be made to the parents for those children entitled to Free School Meals for the week beginning 4th January 2021. This will be paid retrospectively during the week beginning 11th January 2021.

What if my child is in Year 7 and due to sit the AQE?

At present we believe AQE will take place as planned in the post primary school that you chose for your child. We are awaiting further guidance regarding face to face teaching for AQE pupils. This morning we had been advised that children sitting AQE could attend school from Wednesday 6th January – Friday 8th. This afternoon we were advised that this could not happen as it would be against DE guidance. We are awaiting further clarification. At present AQE pupils will be learning at home during this time.

We understand that many parents are anxious both about their child's safety and about the impact of school closures on their child's education. We appreciate that this is a rapidly changing situation, and could change again by next week. Please be reassured that as a school we will provide an excellent standard of online learning and will support you as you work with your child at this time.

Yours Sincerely,

D Blain

(Principal, Whitehouse Primary School and Nursery Unit)