



Message from Ms Drew

I hope you and your families are well and continue to keep safe. Thank you all for your continued support and kind words, it is very much appreciated.

Since the government announced the reopening of schools to begin on 1st June I have been very busy looking at how that would be possible and keep the children and staff safe. Following the guidance from the Department of Education and Hackney Learning Trust, I came to the decision that it would not be possible to open from 1st June to the stated year groups. Instead we are going ahead with our planned INSET day which was set for that date.

After a long zoom meeting with the governing board and with their full backing, I have decided to only open for the key worker and other eligible children who have been attending school throughout the closure from Tuesday 2nd June as normal. Then the following week on Monday 8th open to the confirmed additional Year 6 pupils. From Monday 15th June we will open to the confirmed additional Year 1, Reception and Nursery pupils.

This was a difficult decision to make as we are eager to get the children back to school, however as you can imagine health and safety takes priority over everything. I have written a lengthy risk assessment which I have shared with the Governing Board and Hackney Learning Trust. Both have given their support and backing to my decision in how we reopen. I did not want to rush anything. A copy of the risk assessment for parents/carers will be available after half term.

The provision for how we reopen is based on this risk assessment. I have contacted all parents via email in the stated year groups with details on what will happen. We have a list of all the confirmed children to ensure that numbers stay to the risk assessment. I have also made it clear that children cannot just turn up and expect to enter the school if they are not on the list. Whilst I do not want to turn any child away from the school gates, if they are not on the risk assessment list they will have to wait until we can make different arrangements which will take a while.

I have also shared my decision with our Benthal Parent Voice group along with one of the parent governors, Susannah Barker. We held a zoom meeting on Friday 22nd June. Thank you to those reps that were able to attend the meeting. It was lovely to see everyone and to share my reopening decision and my approach to it. Everyone was so supportive. It was also lovely to hear such positive feedback and how grateful the parent/carer body has been in how all of the staff at Benthal has dealt with this unprecedented situation. I must also thank you for the kind words of support said to me personally. I never thought, in my teaching career and as Head teacher I would ever have to lead the school through something so challenging.

As part of the discussion the new academic year was brought up. Currently I do not know what lies ahead for September and how the new year will look. I am hoping that the government will give schools further guidance before we break up for the summer holidays in order for me to share this information with you all. For now I am staying focused on the health and safety of all the children and staff during the last part of the summer term.

Please continue to stay safe I hope you all have a restful half term break.

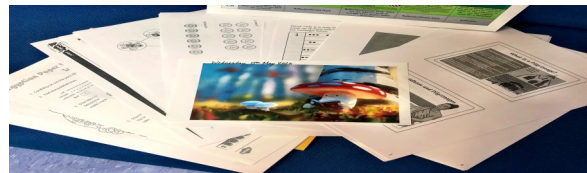
Take care,

Ms Drew

Home learning packs

Home learning continues to be shown on our website page under the home learning tab. Paper copies are still being printed and can be collected from school if you prefer. Please keep an eye out for texts on collection times as they are different for different year groups.

Please be reminded that this week is a half term holiday so no new home learning packs will be given until 2 June.



Free School Meals

Please be reminded that if your family circumstances and income have recently changed, your child might be entitled to Free School Meals. When your child's entitlement is confirmed, if the child currently attends the school, s/he will be offered a hot meal every day and if the child currently studies from home, we will provide your family with supermarket vouchers every week until the child returns to school (excluding school holidays). Please note that Free School Meals, which is means tested, is different from "Universal Free School Meals" (a government provision of free school meals for all pupils in reception, Year 1 and Year 2) and parents need to apply for Free School Meals to check if they qualify. Please contact the school office if you need any help with your application, it is done online and takes only 5 minutes.

Chess

Chess is a hugely popular lunchtime club at Benthall, and we would usually be having Chess in Schools and Communities in school this term, but due to the current climate, they have instead added online chess content that you may be interested in.

There is a chess at home offering <https://www.chessinschools.co.uk/chess-at-home> with chess worksheets and chess Kahoot quizzes and chess videos, for parents to access during this lock down period.

They are also giving away 1 million free gold chesskid accounts, the accounts are free till July 20th when they revert to a basic account.

If your child would like to play with other Benthall children, they can do so by using this link <https://www.chesskid.com/register/kid/group/AFJEGN>



We would love to see as many of you as possible sign up and continue to enjoy chess at home.



Jacqueline Wilson: story writing and illustration competition

Calling all Hetty Feather fans! Have you ever wanted to be a writer or illustrator? Why not join us to complete Jacqueline's new story – The Two New Foundlings – with lots of other children? To join in visit <https://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/story-writing-illustration-competition/> and download instructions. Inspired by the true story of the foundlings who grew up at the Foundling Hospital, Jacqueline has started a new story about two small children arriving at the Foundling Hospital with their foster mother.

Gardening Club

Turning EYFS garden into an edible garden is going well. We have peas, beans and radish plants coming out and have also been growing tomatoes in the greenhouse! Well done to our little Benthall gardeners!



Payments for the school services

Dear parents/carers, we understand that at this challenging time you might have difficulties with paying for the school services; if this is the case, please contact the school office and we will endeavour to help and offer you a tailored solution, which is right for you. Otherwise we request that you pay in full for the services you have used in the summer term, which include breakfast club, playcentre, school trips and lunches. Please clear your balance in full by 1 June even if your child does not return to school until September. Payments for school services form an integral part of the school budget and without those payments we will unavoidably have to reduce spending on other essential areas like school resources, enrichment, extracurricular activities and afterschool clubs, which we are so proud of and which make Benthall different from many other schools. Thank you for your cooperation on this matter.