



South Gosforth First School

'Roots to grow and wings to fly'

Dear Parents & Carers,

As yet another half term comes to an end, I think it's important that we all reflect on what we have all achieved over these last few weeks. When the government thrust us all in to lockdown number 3 back on January 5th, everyone had to adjust to a 'new normal' (again) and prepare ourselves to face the challenges of remote learning, sticking rigidly to household bubbles and managing our feelings of stress and anxiety, whilst also supporting our precious little people to manage these feelings too.

I don't think anyone would argue that this most recent lockdown has been tough. I think some would argue the toughest one yet. Everyone is tired. Tired of not seeing the family and friends who are so special to us. Tired of not being able to go to the places which we love and most of all tired of the lack of routine which we all know is so important for our children.

Even though this has been such a huge challenge for us all, I am so proud of our children, staff and families for doing their absolute best and supporting each other. I am proud of our children for their resilience and strength in adapting to a new way of learning which is such a departure from what they are used to, on top of not being able to seeing their friends and people that they care about like they used to. I am proud of our staff who have worked tirelessly to provide such an excellent blended learning offer, complete with high quality videos and live lessons, whilst also providing hundreds of pieces of feedback every day, to ensure that our children's efforts are recognised and rewarded. I am proud of our parents and carers, particularly those who have been accessing home learning, who have had to juggle their own work whilst also becoming 'overnight teachers' and supporting their children's education in order to help to keep our community safe.

Forgive me for being a bit schmaltzy, but you really are all amazing and the obstacles which each and every one of you has overcome over these last few weeks should make you proud too! I sincerely hope that we will be able to have all of the children back in school on March 8th as the government have provisionally suggested. This would mean that we have 2 more weeks of things as they are after half term before we can at least have our children back in school with their teachers and friends where they belong. In the words of one of our parents: 'We've got this – We are nothing short of superhuman'.

Now for some key messages...

Virtual Coffee Mornings

Whilst we feel for our children who are missing out on their routines and seeing their friends at school, I also recognise that this change in routine has been challenging for grown-ups too and many of us are really missing having the opportunity to have a morning catch up and chat with other parents and members of our school community.

In light of this, I have decided to run some virtual coffee mornings to give any of our parents who would like to have a catch up the opportunity to check in with each other. There will be no fixed agenda for these meetings – it's just a chance for everyone to say hello, perhaps share some useful tips that have worked for them over lockdown and just have a really good chat. Myself and Mrs Whitehouse will join the meetings too as we would love the chance to see everyone.

There will be 3 meetings on the following dates (zoom links below):

- Tuesday 23rd February at 9.30am (Reception & Y1 parents): <https://zoom.us/j/92910871845>
- Wednesday 24th February at 9.30am (Y2 & Y3 parents): <https://zoom.us/j/92664890403>
- Thursday 25th February – 9.30am (Y4 parents): <https://zoom.us/j/94862903671>

There is no need to sign up to a meeting – Just click the link and join the meeting for your appropriate year group on the day. Please note that if you have children in more than one year group, you are more than welcome to join multiple meetings. Don't forget to have your cuppa and a few biscuits to hand on the day! We look forward to seeing you there!

Live Remote Learning

We have got off to an excellent start with our live remote learning which some staff across school started on Wednesday. These live sessions are obviously the exact same teaching inputs which the pupils who are in school are receiving so we hope that this will provide a more equitable offer for the children who are learning from home. We will now be uploading links on to tapestry and seesaw so that our families can access these videos later in the day if they can't manage to watch them live.

Just a couple of reminders for our families watching the lessons live – Please can you ensure that all children mute their microphones and hide their screens when they are asked to. We have had a few comments from parents that some children aren't doing this, which means that we are getting background noise and feedback during the lesson which can be distracting for other children who are working from home. Can we also remind the children that as tempting as it is to use the chat function to chat to their friends and send funny messages during the lesson, they must only use this function to ask a question about their learning. Staff in school will do their best to respond to these questions when they can. Staff are looking forward to starting virtual guided reading sessions on 'Zoom' after the half term break – More information will follow on the days and times when these will be for your child on Tapestry and Seesaw.

Instructions for Reporting Positive Cases of COVID-19 Over the Half Term Break

It is really important that we remain vigilant regarding COVID-19 safety measures over the half term break to minimise the potential for transmission and spreading throughout our community.

If any of your children develop symptoms over half term, then receive a positive test result, please contact me as soon as possible through emailing: robert.adams@southgosforth.newcastle.sch.uk

This is so that I am able to inform any families who may have been in contact with a positive case, as they will need to self-isolate for a period of 10 days from last contact. Thank you all in advance for your co-operation.

Return to School & Recovery Planning

Information from the government and Public Health still states that we are aiming to have all of our pupils back in school for Monday 8th March. Whilst I know everyone in school sincerely hopes that this will be the date of return, it is important to mention that this is not set in stone and is dependent upon scientific advice and the current level of infection rates nearer to the time. As I am sure you are all aware, the government are releasing further information about return to school for all pupils on 22nd February so I will be sending out an update after this date.

Senior leaders are in the process of adapting our current recovery plan to ensure that we can 'hit the ground running' when we return. We will be ready to support our children with their mental health and wellbeing, to build up their stamina for learning again and to plug any 'learning gaps' through targeted and focussed teaching.

New School Library Update

Thanks to the extremely kind and generous donations from our parents and carers, we have managed to make a start on our brand new school library (please see photographs below). Mrs Whitehouse's old office has now been completely cleared (which was a huge job in itself) and Mr Woodley has set to work painting the woodwork and the walls. We have also had a new (and rather tasteful) teal-coloured carpet fitted (which will match perfectly with the beautiful chairs we had recovered – Thank you Mrs Anderson and Mrs England.) Mrs Burnett has been beaver away sorting out some of our non-fiction books and we are due to have the shelving fitted pretty soon after half term, alongside some other special fixtures and fittings. We will also be having some beautiful murals painted on the walls which I am sure that the children will love. The only job after that will be to fill the shelves with some wonderful fiction books – More information will follow on how we will look in to choosing these (we will definitely need the children's help). We are so excited to have this up and running so that our children can access some amazing books from our very own library really soon!



A Celebration of Learning

Our children in each year group have been so busy learning about lots of different things both at home and at school.

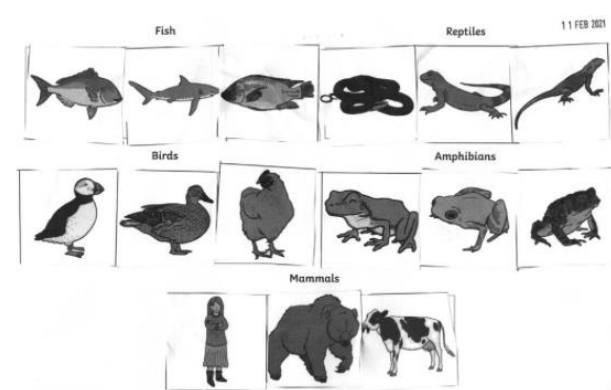
This half term, Reception have had lots of fun with two of their favourite themes - Superheroes and Pirates! They started our superhero work reading 'Supertato' and having great fun making their own Superfruit or Superveggie before they became authors for the very first time and wrote our own re-tell of the story, following our 'Talk for Writing' structure.

The children then had great fun during our Pirate theme making telescopes, treasure maps and following directions during treasure hunts. The children made pirate ships out of different materials and investigated how they could make their ships float. The children also got to practise their addition skills through adding the pirate coins in the treasure chests together.

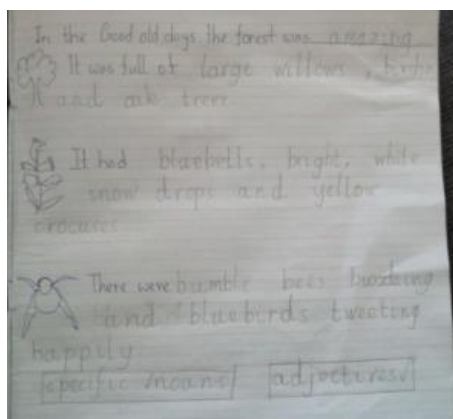
Reception have finished the half term with a week learning all about different celebrations. They have learned all about Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day and even got to make some yummy pancakes!



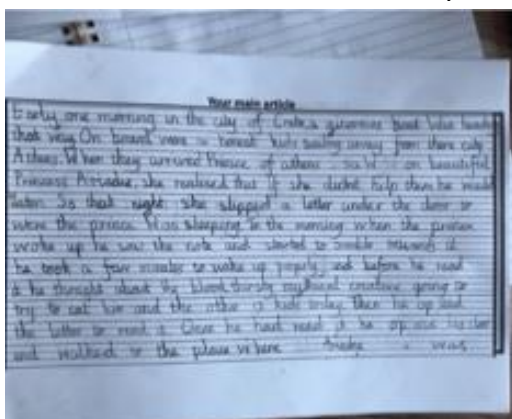
In Year 1, the children have been looking at a story called 'The Runaway Iceberg' in their literacy lessons which they have really enjoyed, comparing measures in maths, doing a really fun animal dance routing in P.E and classifying animals in their science lessons.



Year 2 have been doing lots of scientific investigations around how materials change, looking at physical and human features of the landscape in geography and answering lots of reasoning questions in data handling for maths (including graphs, charts and pictograms.)



Year 3 have learned all about different items of food for lunch in Spanish, which Mrs Gibson has delivered virtually, scaling quantities in maths (useful for making recipes for lot of friends when lockdown is over) and 'Theseus and The Minotaur' in literacy, which the children always find exciting!



Last but not least, Year 4 have been learning a super Makaton dance with Miss Bell, learning basketball skills with Mr Crown for P.E, discussing the Victorians in history, working out fractions of amounts in maths and all about food and nutrition and making healthy choices in science.



'No Screen' Activity Ideas & Welcome to Miss Bell

As many of our children (and grown ups) have been spending so much time fixed to computer / tablet screens over the last few weeks, we thought it would be lovely to share some screen free activities to do with the children over the half term break. These were sourced by Miss Bell, who is our new teacher in Year 4. Miss Bell has had a fantastic start to life at South Gosforth First School (even under these somewhat unusual circumstances) and has already proven that she is a wonderful addition to our team – a big thank you to you Miss Bell for all of her hard work. I know that Miss Bell is really looking forward to meeting everyone in our school community in person as soon as we are able to.

Non-screen activities you can do at home

What can you do when there's no school and you're stuck at home? Here are 25 fun ideas to choose from.

Pobble

25 ideas!



<p>1 How many different words can you make from the letters in this sentence, below? Grab a pencil and paper and write a list!</p>	<p>2 Thank a community hero. Think of someone that helps you in some way and write a short letter to thank them.</p> <p><i>Thanks!</i></p>	<p>3 Get building! You could build a Lego model, a tower of playing cards or something else!</p> 	<p>4 Can you create your own secret code? You could use letters, numbers, pictures or something else! Can you get someone else to try and crack it?</p>	<p>5 Start a nature diary. Look out of the window each day and keep note of what you see. Birds, flowers, changes in the weather, what else?</p>
<p>6 Hold a photo session. Use a camera or a mobile phone to take some snaps. What will you photograph? Your pets or toys perhaps?</p>	<p>7 Build a reading den. Find somewhere cosy, snuggle up and read your favourite book!</p> 	<p>8 Use an old sock to create a puppet. Can you put on a puppet show for someone?</p> 	<p>9 Make a list of all the electrical items in each room of your home. Can you come up with any ideas to use less electricity?</p>	<p>10 Design and make a homemade board game and play it with your family.</p> 
<p>11 Do something kind for someone. Can you pay them a compliment, make them something or help them with a task?</p> 	<p>12 Can you create a story bag? Find a bag and collect items to go in it that relate to a well known story. If you can't find an item, you could draw a picture to include.</p>	<p>13 List making! Write a list of things that make you happy, things you're grateful for or things you are good at.</p> 	<p>14 Design and make an obstacle course at home or in the garden. How fast can you complete it?</p> 	<p>15 Can you invent something new? Perhaps a gadget or something to help people? Draw a picture or write a description.</p> 
<p>16 Keep moving! Make up a dance routine to your favourite song.</p> 	<p>17 Write a play script. Can you act it out to other people?</p> 	<p>18 Read out loud to someone. Remember to read with expression.</p> 	<p>19 Write a song or rap about your favourite subject.</p> 	<p>20 Get sketching! Find a photograph or picture of a person, place or object and sketch it.</p> 
<p>21 Junk modelling! Collect and recycle materials such as yoghurt pots, toilet rolls and boxes and see what you can create with them.</p>	<p>22 Draw a map of your local area and highlight interesting landmarks.</p> 	<p>23 Write a postcard to your teacher. Can you tell them what you like most about their class?</p>	<p>24 Draw a view. Look out of your window and draw what you see.</p> 	<p>25 Get reading! What would you most like to learn about? Can you find out more about it in books? Can you find a new hobby?</p>

Pobble.com – More writing. More progress.

Non-screen activities you can do at home

Our earth is very special. These activities will help you reflect on how we can make it a better place.



1 Imagine you're a reporter.

Can you write a news report from today? What is the major event you will write about?

2 Interview someone

in your family about the world today, what will you ask? Write down their answers.



3 Plant a seed!

Plants can save the earth! Can you plant a tree that will last for years?



4 Clean up your patch of earth.

Go out for a walk in your area, collect litter that has been dropped and put in the bin. Don't forget a pair of gloves and a rubbish bag.

5 Quiz time!

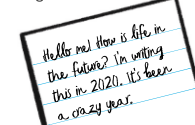
Can you think of ten questions about the earth today? Try them out on someone! How many can they answer correctly?

6 What does the earth look and feel like today?

Can you write a short description? Include what you like and don't like.

7 Hello me!

Write a letter to yourself to open in 20 years time.



8 Investigate!

How are we harming the earth at the moment? How can we change that? Write down what you discover.

9 Write a poem, song or rap to

remind people to look after the earth. Perhaps the title could be 'pollution solution'.



10 What would it be like to time travel?

Write a story about it! Which year will you travel to? What does the earth look like then?

11 Wild art!

Collect things from the garden and make a piece of art. A picture or sculpture from twigs or leaves, or something else.

12 Upcycle!

Use items from your recycling to make something cool. A model, a piece of art or something else.



13 Write a diary entry

of a memorable day from this year. Make sure you include how it made you feel.



14 Should we celebrate Earth Day every year?

Or should every day be Earth Day? Debate and discuss with someone you know.

15 Ask a friend or family member

to write a letter to you. Keep it safe and re-read it in years to come.



16 Draw, paint or make a model

of what you think the earth will look like in 20 years time.



17 Take charge!

Can you be in charge of recycling in your house?



18 Favourite things.

What are they at the moment? Write a list. How much do you think they will change over time?

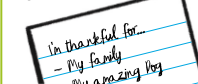
19 Draw a self-portrait.

What do you look like now?



20 Be thankful.

Write a list or draw a picture of all the things you're thankful for on Earth right now.



21 Start a scrapbook.

Collect things from this year to include in it. Photos, newspaper clippings, tickets. What else could you include?



22 Going for goals.

Write a list of your goals for the future. What do you hope to achieve?



23 Eco-warrior!

Create a list of the rooms in your house and monitor how often the lights are used. Can you save electricity in any of them?

24 Design and make a poster

of all the ways we can look after the earth.



25 Make a time capsule.

You could include all of the things you produce from these activities. What else? Hide it away and don't open it for years to come.

Stoneyhurst Bridge Consultation

Please everyone remember that the consultation regarding the closure of Stoneyhurst Bridge is due to end on Monday 15th February. Please ensure to have your say by logging your views on the following website as soon as you can: <https://safenewcastlebridges.commonplace.is>



Keeping Children Safe Online

Please check out the safeguarding section of our website to find a brand new page dedicated to keeping our children safe online. This page has lots of useful tips, resources and websites which will support our families to monitor their children's internet use, which is obviously particularly important at the moment due to children across the country spending so much time accessing home learning. You can find this information here:

http://www.southgosforth.newcastle.sch.uk/web/keeping_children_safe_online/542674

Assembly Poetry

Myself and Mrs Whitehouse have delivered a special assembly this week which included an acronym style poem (which Mrs Whitehouse KINDLY wrote) where the first letter of each line spelled out 'South Gosforth First School'. We asked the children to help us to think of sentences which we could put in to our last verse which spelled out 'school'. I thought that I would end my letter today by sharing this. It really summarises what our wonderful children feel about their school, friends and families.

Spending time away from each other
Outside time not the same as it was
Using computers, tablets and phones
Teachers on Tapestry and Seesaw,
talking through a screen
Helping each other with virtual hugs

GratITUDE board sharing positive
messages
Overwhelmed at times, but we always
have each other
Science, English and Maths keep us
busy
Friends are still there – we just need to
make contact
Online feedback and Zoom calls give
us encouragement and praise
Remember it is hard for our families
too
Try and do things which are active
Happy, smiling faces brighten our day

Find the time to work, time to play
and time to laugh
In your reading you can travel to
magical lands
Read out loud – use silly voices. It will
help you engage.
Sleep well each night, knowing you are
doing your best
Time will go by and we will all be
together again

Soon we will be together again
Carry your dreams with you at
home or at school
Help other people whenever you
can
Offer kindness
Offer your heart to people feeling
sad
Love your school and family

Until next time everyone...

I hope that all of you have a fantastic half term break. Rest, recharge and recuperate. I look forward to seeing you all really soon.

Mr Adams