



**Awliscombe C of E (VA) Primary School**  
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Head of School: Mr Nick Bladon

## **The FORT Federation**

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Penny Hammett

Friday 8th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

What a week. I was nothing short of speechless on Monday evening with the announcement. To make matters worse, when I tried to send the letter home to parents that evening regarding closure the special app designed to make communication quick and efficient crashed!

Anyway, we have survived the first week and we are beginning to get on top of all the new restrictions, guidance and blended learning.

The staff have been amazing. I know it is hard for them as they are feeling their anxieties go up with the uncertainties around safety and transmission levels.

The timing of this lockdown came just a week too early for us in school. Our Google Classroom platform has only just been completed and we were days away from launching in the classrooms with the children. Staff only received their formal training on Wednesday evening.

I want to clarify how it will work and how it will support the learning at home.

Google Classroom is a free web-based platform that integrates your G Suite for Education account with all your G Suite services, including Google Docs, Gmail, and Google Calendar. Classroom saves time and paper, and makes it easy for teachers to create classes, distribute assignments, communicate, and stay organised.

Each child will receive their own G Suite account and then teachers and children will be able to interact with each other more easily. Currently teachers are building their knowledge and confidence of Google Classroom by using it with the children still in school. We aim in the next two weeks to send passwords and joining instructions home. We will continue to use Oak Academy and White Rose maths to support pre-recorded teaching sessions and to use Google Classroom to evidence and share your children's work. Teachers will be able to see what the children have done at home and give feedback. We are aiming to have live drop-in sessions for classes so the children and teacher can talk to each other and at some point, offer collective worship for all pupils.

We are extremely excited with its potential but we are moving slowly to ensure we implement it correctly to ensure we get the best from it. Oak Academy and additional teaching materials provided by the DfE are the approved and accredited teaching material adopted by the vast majority of schools nationally. It may not be to everyone's preferred style but it is the one we are encouraged to use.

Thank you for your patience, we feel just as frustrated that we are unable to start it in class in school but it is fairly easy to use so hopefully children will pick it up quite quickly. The



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introduction of the Google classroom does **not** imply we expect children to sit in front of a screen for the whole day or replace the need for an adult while learning but simply a conduit between teacher and child. We will continue to deliver home learning using the same materials but through the Google Classroom app.

In the interim, while we are getting sorted with Google Classroom teachers will ring you once a week to touch base. The calls will be made throughout the week as all teachers are still in class working with the children and preparing for home learning. We are still working in bubbles and managing the safety in school.

Home learning is not a perfect solution, every household will have different stresses and pressures. Timings for learning can't always be the same as the normal school day. Sharing use of the ICT equipment and internet can be complicated. Adapting planning and work to meet the needs of individuals without being in the same room is incredibly difficult. We try our best to accommodate everyone. The variation in ICT connectivity and devices is so varied this adds additional complexity.

We are trying to find a mix between online and offline work for home. We are planning to continue making the week's work available on Monday mornings. I would suggest shorter sessions with shorter breaks will make the working more effective. Try building your own timetable to work around your household, this will help the children understand what you want from them. Children like routine so if you can share a plan and keep to it, learning tends to go more smoothly. Keep to times, if you set a working limit for e.g. we are going to work 20 minutes then we can have a five-minute break, as it helps the children stay focussed.

I understand that we might not get it absolutely right for your child but we endeavour to keep making improvements.

I am also acutely aware how difficult it is to do any other job while trying to teach/support your child with their home learning, while balancing your own work commitments, home life and family needs is practically impossible. I would ask that you try not to get overwhelmed by it. If we can help with difficulties with the home learning please call the school. We have had some great feedback regarding the home packs but on the flip side some parents find it so frustrating. If you are struggling please let us know.

As I said earlier, unlike the last lockdown, all staff are working in school every day. The number of parents requesting places as critical workers has risen significantly to the point that we are almost at our current capacity to ensure the safety of all. All schools in the local area are experiencing the same issue.

As teachers are all engaged fully in the classroom from 8.50am -3.30pm and we don't have the capacity for a second set of teachers to work solely on online learning and home learning resources.

It is hard to balance safety against need. The government are telling us to look after all critical workers children but that it's not safe for the whole school to be at school, however the numbers of children wanting to be in school are constantly growing.

Finally, can I remind those families with children still in school to contact me as soon as possible your child or any one in your family develops any of the three COVID symptoms.



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Please let me know if you are going for a test. Please ring the COVID line out of school hours 07498645336.

I am always in school if you need me or have any concerns you would like to discuss. Just ring the office. If you have a question for your class teacher again ring the office the teacher will ring you back.

Have a restful weekend.

*Penny*

Mrs Penny Hammett  
Executive Headteacher