

Commonswood News on the Ninth



October 2020

Email: admin@commonswood.herts.sch.uk

Tel: 01707 880420

Fax: 01707 880422

Welcome back & welcome to all our new families!

I hope that you and your children have had some sort of break over the summer. It is wonderful to see the children so settled in school so quickly. They have adapted wonderfully to the new routines and are busy in classrooms and playgrounds working and enjoying being back with their friends.

It is not uncommon for children to experience tiredness particularly towards the end of the week. We are mindful of this and are deploying appropriate strategies to support them with this.

Only three weeks into the term we are already facing more change and uncertainty as the country tries to limit the spread of the second wave of COVID-19 whilst avoiding another national lockdown. We will of course do all we can to communicate to you about any changes to school systems but we will have to continue to count on your co-operation and recognition that we are living in a fast-changing environment.

We fully understand that staggered pick up times are challenging. It is a time when we are ensuring children are handed over safely and any vital messages are communicated. We appreciate that you are being asked to leave the site and wait away from gates to avoid crowding between collecting children from different bubbles. This, however, is essential and it does require co-operation from everyone without exception.

What is clear is that the government is committed to doing whatever it can to ensure that schools and education settings remain open for all young people. This is indeed an extraordinary challenge for school leaders and teachers everywhere, and I hope that the country as a whole understands and recognises our work as we do our very best to make this a reality. Thank you for your kind messages. These really do make such a difference

Thank you for keeping each other safe by adults wearing face coverings at and around the gates at drop off and collection times. It is not beneficial for children to wear masks as it results in children touching their faces more. Children are not permitted to wear face coverings at school.



Nursery

The children are beginning to settle into Nursery. They have been busy exploring the resources while learning to follow the routines and boundaries. The children are slowly becoming more independent which enables them to operate successfully in the nursery environment. They have already learnt how to open their own milk bottles, how to wash them when they have finished before putting them into the recycling bin. Thank you for ensuring that the children have shoes that they can take on and off themselves. Some are managing to change in and out of shoes and wellies on their own. The children

have learnt how to put an apron on independently and when and where they need to wear one and they can now mostly peg their aprons back up when finished too. We are keen for the Nursery children to continue to progress with their independence, therefore please promote independence at home, for example, help us to teach the children to put their own coats on and to change in and out of their shoes.

Reception

The children in Reception have done so well settling into their new classes and have enjoyed getting into their new routines. The children have really enjoyed choosing what they are going to have for lunch and trying new food. We have started our weekly trips to the forest school, and are practising being safe whilst exploring. Please make sure that your child has a pair of wellington boots that fit them, as we will be continuing to visit the forest school on a weekly basis throughout the year. We hope you have enjoyed seeing what they've been learning on Tapestry, if there are any concerns, please let a member of the Early Years team know.



Year 1



In Year 1 we enjoyed learning about plants and animals in the forest school. We spotted different insects and birds. They were very different. We collected lots of natural materials and built homes for the creatures. We also created a Jurassic World, making warning signs, tickets, charging 10 pence to enter – you could only enter if you had the correct money!

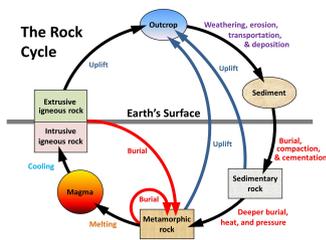
Year 2

In science we have been learning all about everyday materials. Firstly, we identified lots of different materials such as wood, plastic, glass and brick. We then gave examples of objects made from each of these materials. After that, we went on a walk around the school grounds to observe and record a range of objects and the materials they were made from. We had lots of fun!



Year 3

It has been lovely to welcome the children back after so long! We are gradually settling back into our routines and are seeing some fantastic learning. In maths we have remembered the place value of digits and how to use column addition. In English we are starting to remember that 'every time we write' we use capital letters, spaces and punctuation. We have really been focussing on adjectives and using a range of vocabulary. So far in science we have learnt the three types of rocks (sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous) and we have investigated the permeability of them and their density. In geography we have learnt the different layers of the Earth (crust, mantle, outer core and core) and we have looked at volcanoes. Next, we are excited to be learning about earthquakes and tsunamis.



Year 4

Last week we had our first outdoor learning day. Our current science topic is habitats so while we were there, we investigated different habitats finding lots of life in the pond and under logs. We also made our own habitats for different woodland creatures. We have started learning about India, finding out where it is and what the climate is like. We have also chosen an area to become an expert on. Do ask your child about their area of expertise.

Year 5

In Art, we had to draw an accurate picture of our face. We then looked at several Tudor portraits and identified ways they were different or similar to portraits today, and then compared them to our own portraits. Taking half the image, we turned ourselves into Tudors.

Can you tell which half is the Tudor portrait?

Do you know why the Tudors plucked out their hair? Or what they used to turn their faces white? If you want answers come and ask Year 5.



Year 6

It has been a busy start to Year 6, but all of the children have settled back into working hard and quickly back into class routines. In Maths we have been refreshing our knowledge of some core maths skills, investigating place value, magnitude of numbers, negative numbers and problem-solving skills. In English we are working on developing our writing skills with some short descriptive writing tasks and diary writing.

Our main topic this term is "War and Social Change" which will involve researching and understanding our History from the early 1900's and up to the end of World War 2. A great start to the year, well done Year 6.

Home Learning

Back in March, we swiftly set up Microsoft Teams for all the children from Years 1 - 6 to be able to access work on during the lockdown. This was a steep learning curve for staff, children and parents so thank you for supporting your children with this.

Now that we have all returned, we are going to continue to use Teams for homework for Years 2 - 6 and the children in the juniors will also be using Teams as part of some lessons at school. By doing this, they will all become more familiar with the system and be able to use it more independently. Also, when they complete work at school on Teams, they will be able to share it at home with you.

The children need to know their Teams password to use in school and we've reset a lot of them already. Please can we ask that if you/they change their password, the children know what it is. Passwords can be reset by emailing office365@commonswood.herts.sch.uk.

Celebrating success

Has your junior age child done something noteworthy outside school? They may have helped someone in the community, raised money for charity or worked towards achieving something great. If so, please can you email us a photo with a brief description so we can add your child to our Celebrating Success display board. Congratulations to Imogen and her sister Aiyana, and Brooke who donated a (very long) length of hair each to the Little Princess charity.

Homework

By now, the children should have settled into this year's homework routine. For children in Years 2-6 you have selected to receive your child's homework either via Teams or in a homework book. We ask that you stick to the system you have chosen so teachers can mark, give feedback on and monitor home learning. Please do not send in printed work on bits of paper.

As already mentioned, within school, teachers are using Teams in lessons to keep children's skills sharp in using this system. We urge parents to log in every so often too, just so everyone remembers how to do this in the case of another lockdown.

The most important thing you can be doing with your child at home is listening to your child read and discussing the text, vocabulary and characters (if fiction) with them. Summarising, predicting and inferring (guessing what a character or plot might do next according to something that has already happened) are all essential skills. Please be creative in your child's reading record, and rather than just writing "good reading", let us know which vocabulary you have discussed, links you have made between texts or a question your child has answered. Your child's class teacher will be able to discuss this during guided reading sessions.

Homework is given out on **Fridays** and collected in on **Tuesdays**. This provides children with plenty of opportunity to speak with their teacher if they are unsure of any aspect of the work. Teachers will keep records of homework and contact parents if homework is not completed.

Maths at home

Helping your children practice and develop their mental maths skills at home will have a huge impact in the classroom. There are lots of games which are good fun – but can also help with this, these include card games such as Stop the bus, 21s (blackjack), Cribbage, Darts, Monopoly, Yahtzee and Snakes and Ladders.

eSafety - Online gaming

This has become even more popular in recent months – allowing children to play and communicate with their friends. The most popular online games which children are using in the juniors are Minecraft, Roblox and Fortnite.

All of these games have the option of communicating with other players – by voice or text. Already at school we have heard of numerous incidents of children receiving mean / hurtful comments from unknown players, friends of friends and even their friends.

All these games offer parental controls to restrict the type of communication that can take place. By default, there is not usually much restriction set. If you haven't done so recently, please check the settings on your children's games.

Also, face to face, children can usually tell when a comment that they have made has caused offence or has been misinterpreted. They can then quickly apologise or clarify what they meant. Over internet games, where this reaction can't be seen, some children don't realise that they have caused upset, or think about how they 'come across'.

We always recommend that children use devices in a room where they can be monitored – not only to keep them safe but also so they can be guided by an adult when their comments could be misinterpreted.

Communication

If you would like a message to get to the class teacher before school, please contact the school admin team via email or by leaving a message on the answer phone. Messages are quickly passed on. Please avoid coming directly to the office or giving messages verbally to an adult by the gate.

School Lunches

This year, some of the lunchtime routines have had to change to enable bubbles to remain separate. We thought you might like to know how this is working.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children eat in the dining room in an allocated time slot for their bubble. A whole year group bubble is in the dining room at the same time, but each class sits in its own area. When the children have finished eating, enhanced cleaning takes place before the next bubble can come into the dining room. Each class has their own midday supervisors looking after them to reduce contact across bubbles. The children have been wonderful in adopting the new routines and listening carefully to instructions. Using a knife and fork is rather tricky for the younger children, and even though they have plenty of adults who support them while they eat, please could you work on this with your child at home to build their confidence.

All the Junior children are eating in their classrooms to keep bubbles separate. Every class has their own midday supervisor and routines for washing and cleaning.

For all children, there is a designated time to eat. Bubbles need to stay together and so a whole class moves from one area to another at the same time. Please refer to our packed lunch guide as a reminder of suitable portions and things to include in a packed lunch box:

Your child's lunchbox should contain:

1. Main	2. Fruit, veg or both	3. Snack
This could be based on a sandwich, some pasta, rice and/or a protein item such as cold meat. Whatever you choose, make sure it is enough to fill your child up.	Fresh, tinned, frozen or dried fruit is  Any vegetables you like – include a dip if you want to keep it interesting.	One snack item. This could be a yogurt, Cheese, Crisps, biscuit, etc. Try some healthy swaps such as popcorn instead of Crisps.

Please avoid:

Too much food	Too much choice	Items not allowed
Your child's stomach is only this big  Take this into account	1,2,3 will be enough food. In addition, all children should be eating a fruit/veg snack mid-morning to keep them going. If your child is in Years 3-6 please send this in each day.	We have always said no to nuts, fizzy drinks, chocolate bars and sweets. If we see these, we ask children to take them home again. Avoid pressed fruit such as Winders as these are high in sugar content and children need to learn that these do not have the nutritional content of fresh fruit.

when calculating portion size.		
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And one more thing...

Please make sure your child can open all their items as we currently can't touch their lunch or adequately sanitise scissors to help them. If an item cannot be opened (and Frubes are persistent offenders) children will be encouraged to eat the rest of their lunch.

Antibullying week

The theme for Anti-Bullying Week 2020 is: **United Against Bullying**

Anti-Bullying Week will happen from Monday 16th - Friday 20th November and will start with Odd Socks Day on Monday 16th November to mark the first day of Anti-Bullying Week. Odd Socks Day is designed to be fun! It's an opportunity to encourage people to express themselves and celebrate their individuality and what makes us all unique! There is no pressure to wear the latest fashion or for parents to buy expensive socks. All you have to do to take part is wear odd socks to school or workplace, it couldn't be simpler!

This year, more than ever, we have witnessed the positive power that society can have when we come together to tackle a common challenge. Anti-Bullying Week is no different. Bullying has a long-lasting effect on those who experience and witness it. But by channelling our collective power, through shared efforts and shared ambitions, we can reduce bullying together. From parents and carers, to teachers and politicians, to children and young people, we all have a part to play in coming together to make a difference.

We're all a piece in the puzzle, and together, we're united against bullying.

WALK WITH US! WALK TO SCHOOL WEEK 12TH – 16TH OCTOBER

Get your happy feet on, it's time to celebrate.

At Commonswood we are proud to join in with a national Walk to School celebration, where pupils and grown-ups around the UK unite for one week of walking to school.

Our **five-day walking challenge** is a fun and engaging week-long activity, raising awareness and celebrating walking for all. Pupils will be well on their way to reaching their recommended 60 minutes minimum of physical activity per day before even reaching the school gates! Not only will it set them up for a positive day in the classroom, it will also help create healthy habits for life.

Harvest festival

We are not able to hold a Harvest Festival assembly as a whole school this year. We will, however, be having class assemblies (to maintain our bubbles). On Monday 12th October we will be celebrating seasonality and recognising how fortunate we are to have such varied and nutritious foods.

Many families are suffering hardship this year. So, we would like to offer our usual contribution to the food bank. This will be set aside for 72 hours before the food bank team collect the food. If you are able to contribute, children will need to bring their food donation to their classroom first thing in the morning. Please do not send contributions to the office.

Some examples of donations are:

Dried foods such as pasta and rice, tea, coffee, tinned food – please ensure all food is within the best before date.

Book amnesty

Thank you for holding onto school reading books during lockdown. If you have found any of our reading books over the summer, please send them in to school with your child. We don't mind how long you have had them; we are just happy to see them again!

Attendance

Your child's attendance is vital particularly at this catch up time. Good behaviour and attendance are essential to children's educational prospects. Parents of children of compulsory school age (aged 5 and

over) are, by law, required to ensure that their children receive a suitable education through regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Department for Education collects each pupil's missed sessions (a session is half a school day) and the number of possible sessions available to them. The Attendance Improvement Officer monitors this and punctuality on a termly basis together with evidence of the work carried out to bring about improved attendance for those causing concern.

The expectations for school include:

- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School provides a safe learning environment
- The school ensures that records of attendance are maintained according to Government legislation and guidance on a daily basis
- Commonswood Primary & Nursery School monitors attendance and punctuality and acts swiftly to address attendance concerns
- The school works with parents to improve attendance

The expectations of parents include:

Parents should:-

- ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy of their children's school
- impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify their child's school if he/she is absent. **This should be done on each day of absence as part of safeguarding procedures.** They should also provide an explanation for the absence.
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- avoid booking holidays during term time
- Provide a written **request** for absence making it clear why the absence is an exceptional, unrepeatable circumstance.
- ensure that the school are informed of any changes of contact details

Research shows that in general the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2. Demands on standards for each year group is now greater than ever. It is imperative therefore, that children meet their milestones as they progress through school. Parents are notified of how their children are doing through parents' meetings and in the end of year report.

Punctuality The importance of being on time:

- Gets everyone in safely in a socially distanced way
- Gets your day off to a good start and puts you in a positive frame of mind, so that you can make the most of your learning opportunities.
- Sets positive patterns for the future. Habits are formed very early in life and in the long term you can't expect to keep a job if you're always coming in late;
- Leads to a good attendance record and means you don't miss vital early morning opportunities;
- Leads to better achievement because you attend the **WHOLE** of all of your lessons
- Leads to understanding that school is important and education is valuable;
- Helps you develop a sense of responsibility for yourself and towards others and is a sign of good character.

PE Clothing

Please ensure that children bring their PE kits and trainers into school every **Monday** and bring them home every **Friday**.

All pupils are expected to participate in PE / Games lessons. Children need to dress safely for PE. They should wear plain, **close fitting**:

- Shorts – **blue**
- Tee shirt - **white**
- Trainers
- **No watches or any other jewellery**

A loose-fitting sweatshirt (preferably not school uniform) and jogging bottoms may also be useful during the colder, winter months when some PE / games lessons take place outside. **Children should not wear replica kits or expensive branded clothing.**

Something to look forward to...

When it's September, it's a primary school's way
To start making plans for the annual Christmas play
But this year the costumes must stay in their sacks
Live singing might give way to our best backing tracks
Audiences can only watch from their homes
No assembling in crowds, no filming on phones
But please do not worry, the Nativity lives on
The children of Commonswood will have dance, will have song
We're planning festivities all covered in glitter
Christmas 2020 will be better and bigger!



Watch this space...

Parent consultations

In the current climate, it won't be possible to have the usual parent consultations which usually take place before half term. Instead, the teachers will be writing reports to let parents know how their child has settled in this year. There will also be some targets and learning ideas to do at home. To allow teachers time to write these, the reports will be emailed to parents after half term.

Secondary School Applications

Parents of Year 6 pupils will have received the 'Moving On' booklet. The online system is now open for September 2021 secondary school applications. Further details and details for open evenings can be found online at www.hertsdirect.org/admissions. All applications need to be made online and received by 31st October 2020.

Young Carers

A warm welcome back to our Young Carers at Commonswood. It has been a long time since we have been able to get together and we are looking forward to seeing you all again.

If you would like further information about what a young carer is and the support available please go to the school website www.commonswood.herts.sch.uk where you will find links to useful information and services.

If you feel your child may be a young carer and is not currently registered, please contact Sian Mills to discuss in confidence. You can contact Sian by email or telephone, 07753 471712 s.mills@commonswood.herts.sch.uk



Safety Spotlight. Please help us to teach the children about keeping everyone happy and safe.

The school operates a VOLUNTARY one-way system in The Commons (keeping the school on the left hand side) at drop off and pick up times. Please be aware that strangers to the road may not be aware of this.

Parking at the Woodside Centre is prohibited and could lead to vehicles being clamped. Please do not block driveways and garages as this can be a major inconvenience to our neighbours.

Photos and phones - it is not possible to use mobile phones or take photographs on the school site whether inside or outside the buildings. This is designed to protect the small number of families affected by domestic violence or child protection concerns. This includes the use of mobile phones.

Smoking - it is against the law to smoke on any part of the school site, so please avoid doing so here or in the immediate vicinity of our gates where young children can suffer harm from passive smoking.

Dogs – are not permitted on the school site unless it is a registered guide dog.

Diary Dates

October	
12 th – 16 th	Walk to School Week
12 th	Harvest class assemblies –collection for the WGC food bank
23 rd	INSET day – children do not attend
14 th	Flu Vaccination session
22 nd	Year 6 Outdoor learning
26 th	Half Term
November	
3 rd	Individual and sibling photos
5 th	School reports
11 th	Remembrance Day – children are permitted to wear their youth organisation uniforms for the day. Donations to the British Legion can be made via School Gateway
13 th	Children In Need donations via School Gateway
16 th – 20 th	Anti-Bullying week
16 th	Odd Socks Day – please wear normal school uniform just odd socks!
30 th	Occasional Day – children do not attend
December	
11 th	Christmas Jumper Day for Save the Children – donations can be made via School Gateway
14 th and 15 th 18 th	Christmas dinner days – more information to follow End of term 12.30pm – staggered gate times – more information to follow
January	
5 th	Term commences – children start the school term

SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES 2020/2021

Autumn Term

Wednesday	2 nd September	Staff Inset Day – Children do not attend
Thursday	3 rd September	Term Commences for Children
Friday	23 rd October	Staff Inset Day – Children do not attend
Monday	26th October – 30th October	Half Term
Monday	30 th November	Occasional Day – Children do not attend
Friday	18 th December	Term Ends 12.30pm

Spring Term

Monday	4 th January	Staff Inset Day – Children Do Not Attend
Tuesday	5 th January	Term Commences for Children
Monday	15th –19th February	Half Term
Friday	26 th March	Term Ends 12.30pm

Summer Term

Monday	12 th April	Staff Inset Day – Children Do Not Attend
Tuesday	13 th April	Term Commences for Children
Monday	3 rd May	Bank Holiday
Monday	31st May – 4th June	Half Term
Wednesday	21 st July	Term Ends 12.30pm
Thursday	22 nd July	Staff Inset Day – Children Do Not Attend

**Term time holidays have a negative impact on friendships and learning
Please avoid taking your child out of school during term time.**

Governors' policy does not allow term time holidays to be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Section 7 Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory age attends school.



Commonswood Primary & Nursery School is a Safeguarding School

We are an Encompass School

'All schools have a clear responsibility placed on them by the Children Act 1989 and by guidance from the Department of Education to safeguard the welfare of all their pupils. In doing so schools are expected to consult with Social Services if they believe there is a possibility that a child may be suffering from abuse or neglect.'

If you have any concerns about children please contact 0300 123 4043.

**Mrs G Seymour (Designated Senior Person), Mrs S Manning (Deputy Designated Person),
Mrs N Scatchard (Deputy Designated Person) & Mr S Burt (Deputy Designated Person for eSafety)
Chair of Governors Mrs Julie Noakes**