



Ox Close Federation Newsletter

July 17th 2020



Fond Farewells

Today is a day of mixed emotions as we officially end the 2019-2020 academic year and say goodbye to Nursery pupils and Year 6 pupils and, sadly, also say goodbye to valued members of staff.

Goodbye Miss Foster

After many years of loyal and highly skilful service at Oxclose Nursery, Miss Foster is moving on to new challenge. Miss Foster has been at Oxclose since she left school and over the years has provided wonderful care to thousands of children. Her specialism in Speech and Language is well noted, as is her complete dedication to the job. She is going to be a huge miss to the Nursery team, she is an incredible asset and her new school are very lucky. Mrs Taylor is organising recruitment to bring in a new staff member to the Nursery.

Farewell Miss Drew

Today has been Miss Drew's last day at Ox Close. She started with us as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant and then, as a qualified teacher, took over as class teacher when Mrs Harvey was seconded to another Durham school a year ago. I would like to thank Miss Drew for her contribution to Ox Close and wish her well in the future.

Thank you Miss Lanagan

As mentioned previously, Miss Lanagan is moving back to her former school in September. Her contract here was to cover Miss Bowden's usual spring teaching commitment. I am delighted that she has secured this position at her former school and wish her well.

Welcome Back Mrs Harvey

I am delighted that Mrs Harvey will be returning to Ox Close in September. She has had a very busy year in another Durham school and has benefited from the secondment but I know that she is relishing the opportunity to return to Ox Close.

September Arrangements

We have plans in place for September and these were shared last week. Due to the ongoing pandemic, many measures will be in place to minimise risk and there will be staggered start and finish times. Details of these were made available in last week's letter. We will also organise some videos which demonstrate these procedures and these will be launched in the week leading up to the return to school in September. Please rest assured that I am also risk assessing everything in school and will complete an entire new risk assessment in light of the latest Government guidance. I have also been experimenting with classroom layouts and both these and the way in which learning is organised will follow guidance and also be designed to promote welfare and rapid progress. It is certain that there will be further updates from Government over the summer and it is impossible to look too far ahead at this time.

Goodbye Year 6

Today was our last official day for Year 6 pupils. It is always an emotional time to finish Primary School and to take the step up to secondary school. I have enjoyed watching this group grow and time has flown by. Over the course of this week we have had a number of events to mark the end of the Primary School journey. I would like to thank Karen, our cook, for making Afternoon Tea for the children and the Ox Close Friends for buying the hoodies. Our Virtual Leavers event on Zoom on Wednesday was a terrific success. We were joined by Amy from Ox Close Friends, Mr Stone the Head of Whitworth, Pam Sneath, Chair of Governors, Miss Bowden, Mrs Payne, Miss Todd, Mrs Shepherd, Miss Dent and Mrs Franklin and there was 46 people on the call in total. I would like to especially like Alfie, the Children's Champion, who delivered a magnificent speech.

Transition Zoom

Children from across school have this week taken part in Zoom transition calls with their new teachers. I have heard very positive reports about these calls.

Goodbye Nursery

I would like to wish all Nursery children well as they move on to the next step of their education. For some, but not all, this will be at Ox Close Primary School. For obvious reasons, we have been unable to hold the usual Graduation and it has been no secret that we have been looking at various ideas such as virtual events for some weeks. I am delighted that we have managed to organise a number of activities for the Nursery pupils. Karen, the school cook, produced a take away Teddy Bear's picnic for the children on Thursday and we asked parents to take a photo of their child eating their picnic on Thursday with their favourite toy or teddy and, if desired, to post it on our Nursery Facebook page. In addition, we have managed to arrange an end of year Nursery video. This is complex as we have a number of children who are not allowed on videos, while Mrs Taylor is also checking to ensure that there is coverage of all children. As several staff, including Mrs Taylor, are unable to be at work ordinarily, this makes the process trickier still. At the time of going to press, a first cut has been produced and Mrs Taylor is suggesting edits to the videographer. We will post the video by text link to Nursery parents when it is complete next week. Finally, Mrs Taylor and the team have also carried out Goodbye Zoom calls as part of the Graduation process. I would like to thank all of the staff for their assistance with all of these activities and measures.

Podcast Graduation Special

Today Mrs Abley joined me as we produced the final Ox Close podcast. We did suffer some technical difficulties but I hope that lots of people will listen to the broadcast. Over the past 3 months, the podcasts have maintained communication between home and school and I hope that they have been worthwhile as I am not aware of many other schools who have gone to such lengths. The awards that we have held on a regular basis allowed us to continue to promote the values of the Federation and we have had many fantastic nominations, proving that Ox Close pupils have still been shining despite lockdown. Today, we also included end of year awards, these were nominated by the teachers. Listen out to hear of the winners! Well done to everyone who has won a prize and thank you to the Ox Close Friends for sponsoring us. Thank you to parents for nominating over the course of the past 3 months too.

Going the extra mile

This has truly been the most unusual period in schools but I would like to pay tribute to the amazing staff across the Federation. It has not been easy to manage during this crisis but the staff have been there every step of the way and I am delighted with how things have been in school. For several of us, we have had no breaks at all and the holidays will allow chance to rest. I think it only fair to acknowledge that Ox Close has gone the extra mile, managing to do video messages, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Live events such as VE Day and the Ox Close Beat, podcasts, Easter challenges and lots lots more. Well done to all staff for once again showing what an amazing place Ox Close is as all of these events have been additional and not something seen in many other Primary Schools and Nurseries.

Have a great summer and see you in September!

D Harrison

Mr D Harrison
Executive Headteacher