

Friday 8th January 2021



Dear Parents/Carers,

It has felt like a long and difficult week in many ways - another national lockdown, news coverage of the incredible challenges faced by our NHS and disturbing scenes in the US will no doubt have troubled many of us. As the virus has begun to touch more of our lives directly, I have also been sorry to hear of the sadness and difficulties faced by some Meridian staff and families this week and over the Christmas break. Thankfully, at the same time, I have also been heartened to see the rollout of the vaccine on our news channels, to hear stories of those in our community who have overcome adversity and to notice the small things that others do to make a big difference to others - there is still much that is good in the world. Importantly, I have been delighted to see Meridian children, once again, adapting to change - very well done to all of them!

It has been an absolute delight to hear the voices of children at home drift through the computer screens as they take part in Google Meets (staff have commented on the quality of children's virtual etiquette - muting their microphones and using the hands-up feature!). We have also been impressed by the high levels of engagement in our home learning on Google Classroom. Thank you for your support in this. I know that it is not easy for all parents/carers to, once again, join us in this partnership called home learning! As we endeavour to meet the government expectation of daily contact wherever possible, knowing children (or parents) are logging onto Google Classroom is the most helpful way for us to stay in touch and support their learning.

**Times for Google Meets** next week have now been emailed out by Sharon and the links to these teaching sessions will be posted to the Google Classroom stream just before they are due to start.

Here in the school building, children are settling into their new routines in paired year groups with class teachers sharing their time between teaching in class and leading remote learning. We have about 50-60 children in school and are thinking about what this provision could look like if more parents were to approach us for a critical worker/vulnerable child place. It is the case that we are in the difficult position of balancing the need to limit transmission in the community with providing a safe place in school for those who need it and providing high quality remote learning for those at home. We'll let you know our thoughts as they develop. In the meantime, we are endeavouring to support some of our SEND children at home through additional Google Meets and have loaned and delivered laptops to some families via Darryl's Deliveroo service! Please do get in touch if you do not have a usable device - we will try to help.

Similarly, if you have an old but usable device at home that you wish to donate to the school, please let us know - many thanks to those who have already done so. And, on the same theme, I can report that the government has released new information this week about **increasing data allowances on mobile devices to support disadvantaged children** - I have copied this below in case it applies to you. If it does, please let us know via the school office.

*"Schools can now request help to increase mobile data allowances for children who:*

- *do not have fixed broadband at home*
- *cannot afford additional data for their devices*
- *are experiencing disruption to their face-to-face education.*

*If increasing mobile data isn't a suitable option for some children, schools can also request 4G wireless routers."*

In relation to **Free School Meals** for children at home, the government has announced a national food voucher scheme. As this scheme is not yet up and running, Sharon will contact you regarding an interim arrangement on Monday.

That's all for now. As I've mentioned before, I think reading children's literature is a useful distraction and a good way to remember what it was like to be younger! I returned to the Book of Hopes this week. I've included a poem below that I hope some of you may enjoy...

My very best wishes,  
Jo  
Jo Graham - Headteacher

**Hope; Or Learning the Language of Birds, by Jackie Morris**  
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/9-12/book-hopes/>

In years to come you would think of this time as the 'time of great quiet'.  
It would seem to you, then, that the earth was holding her breath.  
Waiting.  
Watching.  
Cars silent in the streets.  
Planes absent from the sky.

After a week the air would seem cleaner, colours brighter.

But the nights seemed darker, perhaps because the stars glowed brighter.  
Fear wandered the dreams of some.

Anxiety stalked.

And you would wake in early morning, as the light slipped into each day  
and listen.

You would hear sweet notes rising with the sun, to greet the light.

You would hear, across the silence, a response.

You would listen, as other voices lifted to song.

You would begin to learn each different voice, begin to see them.

And soon they were no longer just 'birds' but became wren, robin, blackbird, thrush,  
greenfinch, goldfinch, sparrow, jay.

And you would follow the textures of birdsong, call and response, as it moved with the sun.

And you would feel for the first time how the sun was lifted into sky each day,  
on birdsong.

You would feel the turning of the earth beneath your feet,  
as the song travelled with the path of the light.

You would hear the turning of the world  
at the edge of the darkness,

at the edge of the light.

You would know that others were listening  
as the song moved with the light.

And you would learn that, if for a while it seemed the earth stood still,  
holding her breath,

if it seemed that the nights were darker,

somewhere on the turning world the sun was rising,

the birds were singing,

a wave of song in an ocean of sky.

And you would know

that others too would hear those voices.

Out of the silence,

just before dawn,

you would find the threads of hope

as the breath of birds became song.