



# Joy Lane Primary School

*A Love of Learning, for Life, for All*

Oyster Bay Nursery & Oysters SRP (ASD)

Executive Headteacher: Ms DJ Hines

Head of School: Mr M Ashley-Jones

18<sup>th</sup> June 2021

## Early Closure on Fridays

Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing to you to explain further the rationale behind our continued Friday closure and to communicate the next steps we intend to take with regards to Fridays in the lead up to the end of Term 6 and the new academic year. In these times of continued uncertainty, increasing Covid positive cases and daily new guidance from the DFE, we know that what we all crave more than anything is normality and the ability to plan ahead!

What we can say for certain is that we will discuss our early closure on Fridays at the next Full Governing Body meeting on the 12th July.

Since March, we have communicated regularly with you the reasons behind our continued Friday closure and on the 9<sup>th</sup> March, it was explained that facilitating the teacher's statutory planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) in order to prevent adults from across the school crossing bubbles was now an integral part of the school risk assessment. In recent weeks, the Parent Council and other members of the school leadership team have received a few emails and phone calls to discuss our decision, so before it is formally brought up as an agenda item at the Full Governing Body meeting, we thought we would attempt to further clarify the school's thinking in the form of 'myth busting':

**Myth:** The school is not covering the previous school opening hours of 32 hours and 05 minutes - how is teaching time being made up?

**Truth:** The current school published opening hours across the week are 31 hours and 20 minutes, in comparison to the 32 hours and 05 minutes pre-pandemic - a difference of 45 minutes.

As we now function in year group bubbles, our lunchtime organisation runs more efficiently, so our lunchtime slots are 10mins shorter; this is regained as 50 minutes extra teaching time across the week.

Due to the early closure on a Friday, the children do not go outside for a lunch playtime prior to going home; this regains another 25-30mins, resulting in the children receiving, in total, more teaching time than in our pre-pandemic timetable. In addition, the school also runs morning 'Booster' sessions for identified pupils from 8.15am.

We truly value the children's outdoor socialisation time and would like to reassure you that this has not been compromised; with our vast outdoor space, including a Forest School, so much of our curriculum takes place outdoors too.

**Myth:** The school closes at 1:30pm for a deep clean.

**Truth:** At the height of the pandemic, it was essential that we closed the school for extra cleaning. Strict cleaning routines have now become commonplace in the school, with a daily cleaner visiting all areas of the school throughout the day, sanitising touch points. Whilst the school is still cleaned thoroughly on a Friday



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afternoon, the main reason for our Friday closure is to provide planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) for our teachers. The current arrangement means that the children are taught by their teachers all week rather than teaching assistants, who facilitate lesson plans in normal times. This is to allow teachers their statutory release time, which they have to have by law during the school day between 8.30am and 3.30pm. In normal times pre-pandemic, adults would freely cross bubbles and teach classes depending on their specialisms to cover classes. Our risk assessment doesn't currently allow for this. Teachers PPA is ESSENTIAL for consistency of practice, equal opportunity across classes and planning for the Covid gaps, so we felt this was the only way to manage operations at Joy Lane.

**Myth:** The school is only open to 'keyworkers' only on a Friday afternoon.

**Truth:** The school is open to anyone within the school community who may find the early closure inconvenient.

**Myth:** It has been decided already that from September 2021 the school will continue to operate in the same way.

**Truth:** The Full Governing Body will discuss Fridays on the 12<sup>th</sup> July and the school will communicate the decision after this date.

**Myth:** The school closes early on a Friday so that the staff can finish early as well.

**Truth:** The teachers plan together in their year group teams when the children have left, using their PPA time to ensure that educationally the needs of the children are met for the coming week. Without this designated time together, the education of the children would be disrupted. Our teaching assistants look after the children on a Friday afternoon, join planning, preparation and assessment meetings when necessary and carry out a myriad of duties during this time.

Finally, we hope this 'myth buster' has gone some way in explaining our reasoning for early closure on a Friday afternoon, and that you are reassured that the children's education is in no way compromised. The current arrangement will stay in place for the remainder of Term 6. Arrangements for the new academic year will, as we have said, be reviewed when the Full Governing Body meet on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

We welcome and thank you for your thoughts and feedback during what is a challenging time for us all.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Graves  
Chair of Governors



Debra Hines  
Executive Headteacher