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Friday 24th April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Happy Friday everyone! I hope you are all safe and well and beginning to achieve routines which are working for you and the children. In line with our GROW values, you all definitely deserve an award for Resilience over these last five weeks! Thank you for all your support in these challenging times and a huge well done to all the children and yourselves for getting through this first week of Home Learning after the Easter break.

I imagine that the saucers and applause were heard loud and clear last night where you live. May I take this opportunity to thank the Key Workers within our school community for all the hard work they are doing at this crucial time. I would also like to thank the staff for their efforts over the last few weeks in preparing and delivering our remote learning and support provision; I also hope that you have found it helpful and reassuring being contacted by staff. I feel very honoured to be part of such a great team at Fir Tree.

With time to reflect over the holiday, I think we should all be proud of the response the school community has made within the challenging circumstances we all find ourselves in. I'm often asked when we are likely to be back and can honestly say that, just like you, I only know what the daily briefings tell us. So, if this is for the whole of term 5 (or for the next two weeks) then I believe the key is to pace ourselves and establish those routines which work best for you and your children. With that in mind I thought the following words could be the thought of the week. It was sent to me and you may have seen it, but I think the sentiment is important and hopefully reassuring.

'Don't stress about schoolwork. In September (or hopefully sooner), I will get your children back on track. I am a teacher and that's my superpower. What I can't fix is social-emotional trauma that prevents the brain from learning. So right now, I just need you to share your calm, share your strength, and share your laughter with your children. No kids are ahead. No kids are behind. Your children are exactly where they need to be.'

Furthermore, the teachers and I are communicating regularly, where we discuss the issues arising from Home Learning and central government developments. Any feedback we receive is welcomed, shared and will assist us in our future planning and considerations.

I am conscious that you are having lots of websites and information thrown at you to support learning at home. In addition to this, many children are displaying that they prefer completing online activities rather than recording. As advised by teachers, go with what your child is willing to do, any learning is learning. Teachers are setting weekly learning to ensure that children keep up and do not fall behind. To support parents, the government have launched the Oak National Academy online classroom and resource hub and BBC Bitesize lessons this week. Many children have accessed these already and I am sure you will see these more in Home Learning.

The sector-led Oak National Academy is an online classroom and resource hub. The Academy offers 180 video lessons each week for schools to use, across a broad range of subjects. The lessons cover children in Reception through to Year 10 and are free to use by both teachers and young people.

The Oak National Academy can be accessed here:

- <https://www.thenational.academy/>

The BBC has launched an education package across TV and online, featuring celebrities and teachers, helping to keep children learning at home and supporting parents.

BBC Bitesize can be accessed here:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

An additional useful resource is another free downloadable book, which helps explain the current situation to children. It explores some of the feelings they might be experiencing and includes illustrations by Axel Scheffler, who illustrates the Julia Donaldson stories.

<https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler/>

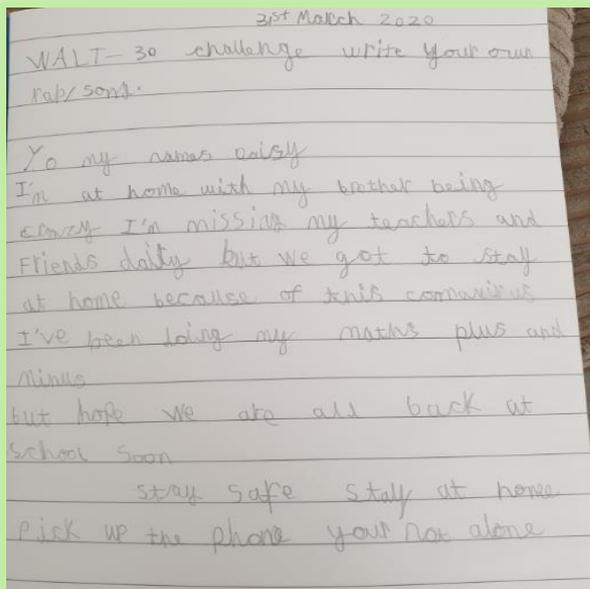
All these links can be found in our Home Learning Section on our school website.

You may be aware that on Facebook there is a group called Joining Together, they have decorated the fence of Lower Way with art to support key workers, and the children of Newbury and Thatcham have jumped on in vast numbers. Many local schools are decorating their own school fences with art and pictures they have created. Rudy (Year 5) and his Mum have made some lovely signs to start the Fir Tree fence off. It would be lovely for the children to get involved and tie some additional cardboard art works on to the fence, to stand out with support for all the key workers, and I am sure you would all love to see it on your walks too. A huge thanks to Rudy for starting it off!



The staff and I have continued to enjoy seeing and hearing how everyone is doing. Please do keep sending the emails of work and challenges to them; or alternatively to office@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org. I am currently working on additional challenges to add to the Fir Tree Challenge as we have many children that have nearly completed all 30! With that in mind, let's see what fantastic things have been going on in the Fir Tree community over the past few weeks!

The Fir Tree Challenge:



Aiden in Year 4 completed tasks 3 & 26 - he's made a tower out of everyday objects and a musical instrument - good work!

Rocky in Year 5 has completed task 22 - Tell a funny joke: 'What did the Dalmatian dog say once he ate his food?' 'That was spot on!' Ha ha ha!!!

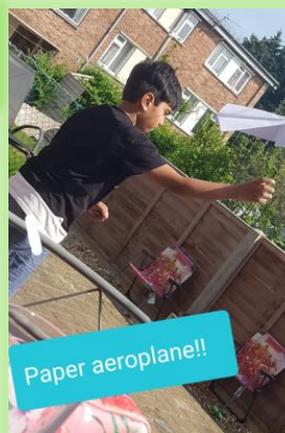


Waseel in Year 2 has completed tasks 23, 5, 13, 2 & 30 - wrote a rap song, tidied, without being asked; made a paper aeroplane; he's built a den with his brother Daneel in Reception and constructed a very nice tower too - well done boys!



Riley in Year 3 completed task 26 - he made his own musical instrument and then played it; looking very cool there Riley!

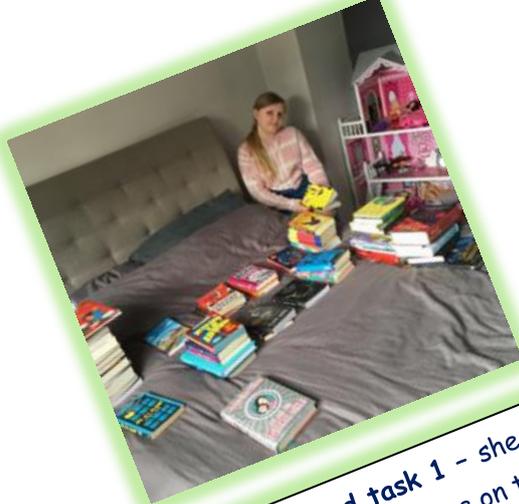
Dolly in Year 6 has completed task 22 - Tell a funny joke: 'Why did the mouse go on the road?' Because he had no road sense! Very funny Dolly!!



Lily in Year 4 has completed tasks 22, 23, 26, 4, 28, 3, 5, 12, 29, 30, 17 & 19 - make a musical instrument; make and complete an obstacle course, conducted a science experiment, told a joke, completed a chore; played noughts & crosses; built a tower; ordered her books alphabetically, did 50 start jumps and made her food into an animal, brilliant stuff Lily - you must be exhausted!!!

Mrs Drewitt completed task 23 - a choreographed a dance to song inspired by Mrs Smith!





Leanne-Marie, Year 1 & Rocky, Year 5 both completed task 1 - Reading in unusual places! Mmm Leanne-Marie! ☺



Dolly, Year 6 completed task 1 - she sorted all her books. Fancy keeping an eye on the school library Dolly???

Beau in Year 1 completed tasks 1 & 3. An interesting place to read Beau, how was the view up there? She also completed task - and built a tower.

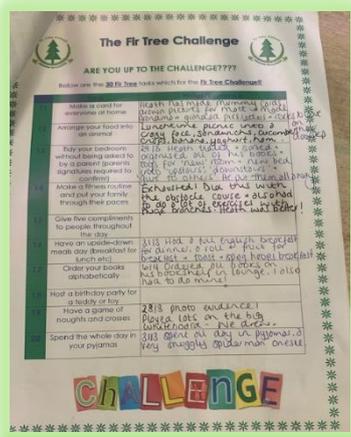


Beau, Year 1 and Penny, Year 4 have continued to complete lots of tasks, in fact tasks 17, 19, 9, 20 & 21 They have had a PJ day, even going for a walk in them; sketched, choreographed a dance routine, ordered books and more. Amazing girls - keep it up!

Mrs Hayton completed task 3 - After a couple of collapses, this was final effort - tower!



Leanne Marie in Year 1 has completed task 22 - Tell a funny joke: 'Why did a zillion giants cross the road?' To get to their giant's house. Well done Leanne-Marie!



Miss Purcell and her sister completed task 5 - they built a den in the garden; I wonder what Mrs Purcell thought?

Heath in Year 1 has been super busy and completed lots of tasks! In fact, he only has 7 to go - good luck Heath, you can do it!



Miss Crew has continued to go from strength to strength completing lots more challenges - she's leading teacher wise!
 She has made a musical instrument; done some sketching; ordered her books alphabetically; made an animal out of her food; conducted a science experiment and tidied her bedroom!
 Good work Miss - keep it going!!!!

Logan in Year 3 completed task 23 - He completed chores without being asked - this is what we like to see!!!



Miss Rummins completed tasks 17 & 28 - she organised her books alphabetically, treating herself to a cuppa after and made muffins, without butter! A fab Science Experiment Miss!

Freddie, Year 1 completed tasks 5 & 30 he made a paper aeroplane and made a den at Trinity over Easter.

Great stuff Fir Tree, so many super challenges being completed and creatively too; keep sharing them, especially those of you who are close to completing them all! I wonder who will win overall the teachers or the children - it's looking very close!!!!

Mrs Hunt has completed task 5 as she made a den at Trinity school using the parachute. She also completed task 28 - a science experiment which was trying to make edible fairy cakes. I can report that she has eaten two with no side effects yet!!!



If you sent in photos and they are not in this week's letter, they will be next week.

Miss Fowler completed task 12 - She created an animal from her food - looks yummy! Nom Nom !

Amazing Fir Tree Work:

Look at the brilliant work that has been produced this week!!



Jaydon in Reception has been busy making a shaker from a milk bottle all by himself and was super proud of himself!



Lilly in Year 3 has been working really hard painting lots of rainbows and has learnt to ride her bike without stabilisers- well done you!!



Jonah in Reception has been very busy, really active and making lots too - good job Jonah!



Noor Year 3 wrote a fantastic Easter letter on PurpleMash as part of her Home Learning - well done Noor!

Noor Mohamed
33 Village Lane
After Christ

Dear Friend,

How are you doing? I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

I heard from the people talking in the village that the Prophet Jesus was killed today. Some people in the Village are very upset by this news and I understand why you may be too.

This is quite shocking news and what is more terrifying is that people couldn't find his body when they tried to open his grave. I am sure God would have taken him to protect him for a better mission. Great Teachers don't die and their teachings and words will be like light in the dark days.

I am sure the future will tell us more about this story but if Jesus disappeared from our lives, his teachings didn't and our memories of him will be alive and we will teach it to our families and future children.

My dear friend, look inside your heart for his teachings and you will know he is still alive in you.

Yours sincerely
Noor Mohamed

Quinn -Year 2 made a fantastic bird box - how creative Quinn!

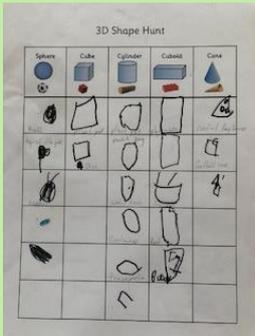


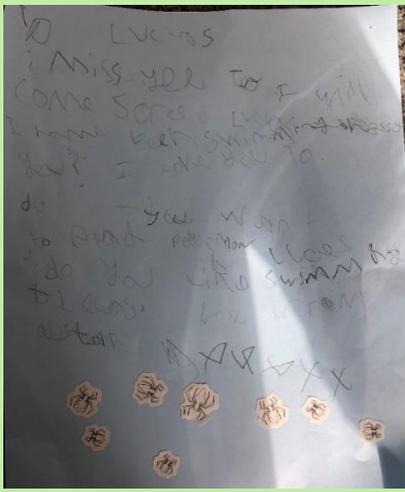
Lily in Nursery has been doing lots of practical activities and having great fun - super job!



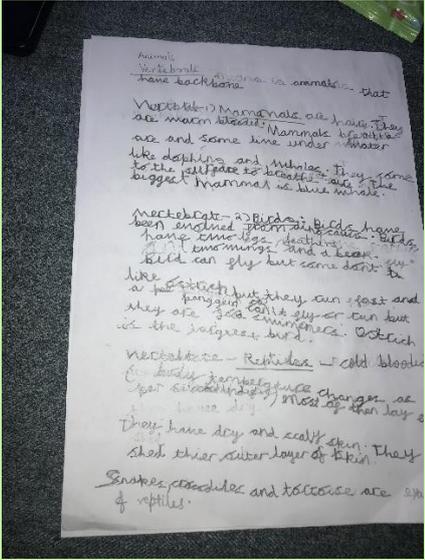
Bella in Reception has really enjoyed learning all about shapes and has done some fantastic recording - brilliant Bella!

Daniel in Year 3 designed a fab magazine cover on PurpleMash; looks very professional, well done!





Alistair in Year 1 made a stunning model of a castle and worked really hard on writing a letter too - wow Alistair, what a star!



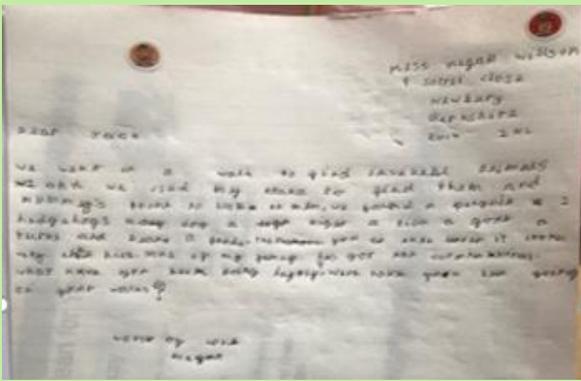
Rishi in Year 2 completed Mrs Wood's European countries challenge, he now knows 37 countries of Europe and can very well locate them on the map. He has also been writing about animals too. Amazing work Rishi, you should be very proud of yourself!



Ellie in Year 1 and Jack in Nursery have had fun with hopscotch maths and have had fun baking at home too - brilliant!!!



Megan in Year 1 has been writing letters to her friends, what a lovely thing to do and beautiful handwriting too!



A huge well done to everyone working at home – keep the photos and emails coming!!!



EASTER COMPETITION

You may recall that class teachers set an Easter Project on decorating eggs for over the break! There were some lovely creations! Have a look below:



By Riley - Year 3



By Abbey - Year 1



By Ethan - Year 5



By Jack - Nursery



By Aiden & Family Year 4



By Bella - Reception



By Penelope - Year 2



By Mrs Hendry



By Ellie - Year 1

Well done to everyone who took part and thank you to those who shared their creations.

Challenge of the Week from Mrs Wood:

This week's challenge is a classic...

I want to see if you can build **a house of cards!!**

The cards must stand up by themselves without any support. Certificates will be awarded to any who manage to complete this challenge. Good Luck!! I have a feeling the children are going to beat the adults with this one!!!



Real PE Challenge of the Week from Mr Hosier:



What you do:

Count how many times you can pass the ball around your body in a set time.

In a pair:

Stand opposite a partner with a ball in your hands. Pass the ball around your body and then your partner's. Pass the ball to your partner and they repeat the actions.

In a group:

Player 1 passes round player 2, player 2 round player 3 etc. Time how quickly you complete it or how many you can do in a set time.

How you score:

Count how many times in total you and your partner pass the ball around each other in a set time.

Personal best: Try to better your score on the second attempt. Remember to let office@firtree.newburyacademytrust know how you do!!!

Government Updates

Guidance for parents and carers: keeping children safe online. The DfE have updated information for parents and carers to include a section on keeping children safe online. It provides links to online resources that will help support parents and carers in keeping their children safe online. Full details can be found in section 6.3 of the guidance for parents and carers on the closure of educational settings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-forparents-and-carers>

We also sent this link earlier in the week on children's wellbeing and mental health at this time, but in case you missed it here it is: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

As always, an action-packed letter. I hope you have found this letter informative as well as enjoyable to read. I have also attached a fun family activity that is a little different and you may wish to print and do as a family. Take care, try to relax, stay safe and have a lovely weekend.

Best wishes

Mrs L Wood
Associate Headteacher