

Thursday 26th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

After the hustle and bustle of closing the majority of the school and cleaning down the allocated work areas over the past few days, I just wanted to reach out to you today to check you are doing okay?

We have all entered a very new and different world this week. Teachers have had to completely flip everything they have ever done on its head and try to teach activities remotely, without the personal contact they draw on to guide each lesson. As well as become technical wizards and film star too! And parents, we know that you must feel that you have suddenly had to become teachers overnight!

We know. We understand. We hope that everyone can accept this week as one of working things out. We don't expect you to suddenly be able to deliver lessons, just as we hope you don't expect us to get our online posts right straight away as we try to get a feel of timings, amounts, posting styles, etc. A steep learning curve all-round 😊

Also, we are well aware that there are dozens of posts on social media about home learning spaces, routines, timetables, resources and we wanted to reassure you all - take your time to settle into our new daily life. Give yourselves and your child(ren) time to adjust and don't put yourselves under too much pressure. The change for all of us is huge and we aren't going to get it right overnight.

We have learnt lots too this week. We will be designing a more consistent upload for Dojo which we hope will help, particularly for those of you with children in different classes. Also, we will try and improve elements that children can do independently so that you can perhaps explain something to your other child or get on with your own things.

Please remember, we are mirroring this in school. We have an hour and half allocated for the on-line learning, with a little free-choice time and exercise thrown in to fill our morning. Then in the afternoon we go for something from the list of ideas that was in the envelope or ask the children what they would like to do (for example, including some of the alternative ideas on Whole Class Story; or to listen to an actual story on their Class Story that some teachers are sharing; or to read a book for a bit).

The 'education' happening now is different for every child in the country and we know that. All schools will adapt when we get back to school whenever that might be. But for now, you have trusted your children in our care for many years. You can trust us now. We're still here – we're still your school family.

We are working on providing activities to keep us all going and while it may feel like the support is gone, it isn't. The teachers are there for you every day and there will be someone in the office if you need us. Most of all, just hug your children and tell them you love them. Tell them that **we** miss them. Play with them, joke with them and give our activity posts a go as best you can.

In what could have the potential for being a never-ending summer holiday, it may be useful to pre-empt the 'I'm bored' sentence. Whilst, it might seem okay being at home to begin with, the longer this lasts, the more grumpy and 'testing' things are likely to get. A rigid timetable may not be the right thing, but an idea of a general routine may help the day pass and give a distinction between school days and Easter holiday days when we will stop the uploads.

Just remember this is history in the making ... in years to come, we will reflect: "in 2020, everything was shut down in an attempt to stop the virus; supermarkets were out of everything because people were hoarding as much as they could; we were scared about the economic failure of our country and for ourselves because we couldn't work; don't you remember? You were 8...". And in response: "all I remember was the school closing and being home schooled; I remember playing in our garden; I remember eating meals as a family as you were home from work; I remember getting great sleep because I wasn't getting up early for school; I remember board games as a family" or "I went to school and there was hardly anyone there; the teachers were kind and helped us to do what we wanted; we had all the space to ourselves; we had extra treats and things too; we made special relationships and our parents knew that we were safe".

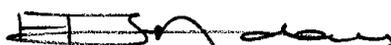
Each child and family is different. Give yourselves time and get it right for you. Focus on building memories and helping your child deal with such change by allowing yourselves to grow into the situation. Routines and work will come. Happy settled children, make happy settled adults.

Be kind to yourselves and do what you can; build a memorable time for your children and trust your instincts for your child. You know them best.

Be safe, be strong, be true to the needs of your family

Together we've got this

Warmest blessings to you all



Hayley Adams
Head Teacher



TOP TIPS

*Eeeeeek ... things that might help if you have suddenly become your child's teacher
No expectation, but background and ideas*

- Some children need structure and routine. You can help them by using a timetable (maybe make this together with pictures depending on your child's age). This will help them see what is happening at each step of the day, so they know in advance what they will be doing next.
- You might want to set a specific place for them to do their activities so that it becomes clear about the different parts and expectations of the day. At school they have their classroom, table and belongings to look after and this can bring a feeling of normality and independence.
- Prepare them for changes in routine. Moving from 'remote school days', to Easter and back to 'remote school'
- Help your children to recognise and name different emotions and feelings – this is all very weird for everyone and can affect how we behave. You can do this by discussing their own emotions, how characters in books and on TV programmes might be feeling and how you yourselves might be feeling. Alongside naming the emotion, describe it and explain why you, they or fictional characters might be feeling like that.
- If your child is feeling unnerved by the situation use the social story attached to help them understand what is going on or try some of the relaxation ideas also attached.
- Be aware of your child's sensory needs and support them in managing that need to help them learn e.g. comfortable clothes, keeping the work space clear to avoid over-stimulation or distraction etc.
- As we are all socially isolating, play lots of games with your child to encourage maintaining social skills such as taking turns and winning and losing.
- Your child may be able to listen in different ways – some children need something to fiddle with whilst you are talking to them or you want, some may need to move, some may prefer quiet.
- To avoid overload, ask your child to do one task at a time and build in breaks to rest, recharge and move about a bit (perhaps try not to let them be glued to gaming devices all day long – enjoy the fresh air and exercise too)
- Some children thrive on rewards for motivation and to attend to their task. This could be home related or supported by your child's teacher if you upload to the messages or portfolio section.
- Build on success and help your child(ren) to pursue more of what they enjoy. If things are tricky, support them with the areas they find difficult if you can, but otherwise, don't worry. Perhaps get in touch and see if we can offer advice or suggest a different way of going about things.
- Put clear boundaries in place – trust us on this one. No means no.
- Your child(ren) may want to use a computer to complete some written tasks. This highlights spelling errors and offers alternatives so helps with a feeling of independence. Typing can be hard though – use this as a brilliant opportunity to play Dance Mat Typing <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr> (KS2) and your child(ren) will have a skill for life!
- General learning skills can be improved by playing games to support memory and retention e.g. pairs, Go Fish etc.
- Don't forget to read or listening to reading regularly – this can give you a break too. Children can access age related e-books or audiobooks in lots of ways eg Oxford Owl or Libby or perhaps their teacher is reading to them on Dojo. Encourage (don't force or push) them to share what's happening in the story and share

their excitement, wondering aloud what will happen next. This will also develop their vocabulary and comprehension, without them even realising that they are learning.

- Don't make reading a fight. Encourage your child to read one page and you read the next page. Read some books to them for pleasure and invite them to read a section if they want to (don't push if they don't want to). By developing a love of books and stories children will naturally want to learn how to read, so make the experience as pleasurable as you can.
- Help your child(ren) develop their fine and gross motor skills and core stability by using lots of physical resources that the children can move around (anything will do) as well as time outside to run, balance, throw and catch – you could follow Joe Wicks or a Yoga app!
- Include children in supporting you with everyday maths problems e.g. cooking, measuring, money etc.
- If applicable, to help speech sounds, model speech to the children by repeating words back to them correctly.
- Help understanding by giving children time to process what you have asked and respond (sometimes it's longer than you think) and use simple language and break instructions down into smaller steps.
- Encourage talk time all the time. Get your child(ren) to answer questions, such as who, what, where, when and why; to talk about experiences in detail to help develop new vocabulary all the time; to talk about and understand new and tricky words.
- If all else fails, smile, laugh and find something else to do ☺

