



Monday 27 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Google Classroom

I hope this letter finds you well, that you are managing to stay healthy and safe during this period whilst also managing your own workload and caring for your children. We are operating in extraordinary times. Since the closure of school to the majority of pupils, we have been presented with unprecedented challenges. As a state school we follow the Department for Education (DfE) requirements and guidance and are guided by Teaching Unions, our Governing Body, IT providers and other professional bodies.

The government has been clear that in these circumstances, learning and support for children needs to be organised very differently. Since the closure we have managed distance learning alongside onsite provision for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. We have also experienced higher than usual levels of staff absence through illness and dependency leave. This, in addition to those caring for their own children and elderly parents, means that some of our staff have been unable to work and so we are at a reduced capacity.

Learning from a distance is very different from learning in school. We have many factors to consider including each family's circumstances and their psychological wellbeing. As the British Psychological Society reports, "Taking care of your physical and mental health is crucial at this time: this goes for children, parents and teachers. Keeping minds active and happy, ready to return to school when the time comes is the most important factor." In addition, the pressures faced by teachers must also be recognised. They have been designated as key workers and are also facing the same stress and anxiety about their own wellbeing and that of their families and need to be treated reasonably and fairly.

The formal curriculum has effectively been disapplied, "Emergency legislation will lift curriculum requirements for schools, giving flexibility to provide support, activities and education in the way they see fit."(DfE)

However, we are concerned about the children's absence from education, and so Teachers have set tasks which follow the curriculum as closely to what the children would have been learning during ordinary times.

We have considered the most effective and safe ways to support learning and communication for all involved. We want to ensure that the children and staff work in a safe environment and to this end we continue to explore safe ways of working, where no one is made to feel uncomfortable, unsafe or unsupported.



You may have heard that some schools are providing 'live' lessons. This is not the case amongst our local state schools, with whom we have consulted, and the DfE are clear that, "There is no expectation that teachers should live stream or provide pre-recorded videos". This is echoed by the British Psychological Society, "Online lessons are not desirable for primary children as the teacher-pupil interaction is not easily replicated".

When you have the opportunity to look at your child's Google Classroom you will see that the Teachers provide links for children to watch pre recorded videos often used in classrooms to enhance their learning.

We are embracing the opportunities for online communicating and connecting. This week the children can view my message on the website and their Teachers will be posting a video or audio message on Google Classroom. This is new territory and we will continue to develop what we provide.

As I stated before, you should not feel guilty if you are finding distant learning difficult to manage. We as Teachers are too, but we want the children to continue to remain happy in their learning and play. Please remember the priority is to look after yourselves and your children. Teachers have provided some guidance for structuring the day which includes time for play, snack time and lunch. We suggest up to two hours a day of work set by teachers for pupils in KS1 and up to three hours for pupils in KS2. Outside of these hours the children should be encouraged to exercise, help with tasks around the home and to read. If you are struggling to keep up with the lessons provided or to manage the use of equipment, do explore the lessons from BBC Bitesize and Oak National Academy. Both have been specifically commissioned for this period of lockdown, are part of your child's curriculum and they can watch them independently.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

Best wishes,

Geraldine Gallagher

Headteacher