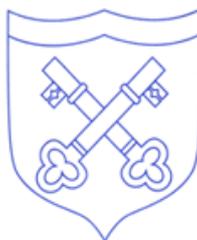


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Coronavirus Update – Return to School and Remote Learning during Lockdown Update

Dear Parents and Carers,

I'm sure that many of you will have followed the news yesterday and have picked up on the statement regarding school closures, but for those of you who may not have had the chance to see it yet, I wanted to make sure everyone was as up to date as possible. It has been rare, since the start of the pandemic, that schools have been provided with much clarity or advance notice, but we are pleased that we now have at least some certainty about what will be happening in the coming weeks (although we are, of course, disappointed that we won't have everyone back in school for a little while yet). The key announcements from yesterday in parliament are as follows:

- The **earliest** schools might 'begin to re-open' will be Monday 8th March, which is the start of the third school week after the half-term holiday;
- There will be a plan/review set out on Monday 22nd February (the first day after the half-term holiday), with further updates;
- When the decision to return has been made, schools will get two weeks' notice of this.

Sadly, this means that we have at least four more school weeks of home-learning under the current arrangements. I know that this will be bitterly disappointing for many families and the children, but I hope that it provides some hope that there might be an end in sight, at least in terms of getting the children back into school.

We also received a clarification from the Department for Education (DfE) yesterday that schools would not be asked to open over half-term for children of critical workers as was the case in the first lock-down. I don't think anyone was particularly expecting there to be an offer, but I thought it was worth sharing in case anyone had been wondering.

In light of this news, I thought I would give you an update on the school's work position on remote learning.

Since the country first went into lockdown in March 2020 we have made great strides with technology and our ability to provide a greater depth of remote learning opportunities. In the autumn term we started to use Microsoft Teams as our main form of contact between staff. The school has utilised Teams effectively for staff meetings and staff training which has reduced the need to have too many adults in one room. We are now in the process of developing the use of Teams with pupils. However, the training we received regarding Teams was limited to only 1 session; we are hoping to have more sessions shortly. For this reason, most of the teachers are continuing to use Zoom as a platform for their 'live' sessions as this is the platform they feel the most comfortable with.

There is much debate at the moment around the usage of live lessons versus recorded lessons. Currently, as a school we are committed to having a daily 'live' session to ensure that staff and pupils are communicating regularly. We also have the addition of live contact in the form of collective worship as well as more individualised, small group feedback sessions, for the older children. As staff become more proficient at using the technology I am sure there will be an increased use of these opportunities. It is important to remember that not all teachers are confident IT users nor are they trained TV presenters or Youtubers— all of this is a huge learning process for us all!

There are some important considerations when using live lessons or live contact. We have to ensure that all possible safeguarding mitigations are in place, both in school and the children's homes, to protect both the children and the staff. Also, and perhaps most importantly, we recognise the strain and limitations that some of you will have at home if we were to use live lessons only throughout the day. Considerations that we need to take are: access to suitable IT equipment at home (although now we have discovered that Xboxes and Play Stations can be utilised), enough bandwidth from the broadband or 4G provider to access live broadcasts especially in families where there is multiple use, the timing of live lessons to fit in with busy schedules that parents may already have who are working from home or those that have more than one child learning at home.



A recent study in remote learning carried out by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) concluded that when it came to considerations around what worked best – live or recorded lessons – *‘that teaching quality is more important than how online lessons are delivered. What matters is ensuring the elements of effective teaching are present – such as clear explanations, scaffolding, and feedback – and whether those explanations build clearly on pupils’ prior learning or how pupils’ understanding is subsequently assessed.’* The study was inconclusive on whether live or recorded material had the greater impact on pupil outcomes and again came back to the quality of what and how concepts were being taught rather than the medium they were being taught through.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog-live-teaching-and-pre-recorded-video-lessons-what-does-the-evidence-say/>

Current DFE guidance also makes clear that ‘characteristics of good teaching are more important than the medium of delivery’. We know that we cannot recreate the powerful impact that live teaching in the classrooms has remotely but we will be committed to ensuring the best possible remote learning experience to continue to inspire a love of learning for every pupil.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice>

On Monday 11th January Ofsted published a document entitled ‘What’s working well in remote education’, the link to this document is below. Within this document Ofsted reiterate that effective remote learning can take many forms and dispels many myths that are not based on educational evidence on what constitutes effective remote education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education/whats-working-well-in-remote-education>

We believe that, in the main the balance of live sessions and PowerPoint lessons such as the maths from White Rose, is most suitable for primary aged pupils as this allows our pupils to access the material at their own pace, rewind to key bits of information and watch the recording or PowerPoints as many times as they need to understand key concepts.

All of this of course supplemented with ‘live’ lessons and feedback sessions where our teaching staff will be on hand to respond to questions and queries. Again this assertion is backed up though the findings in the EEF study. Along with government guidelines, we are committed to ensuring that we provide 3 hours of learning for our KS1 pupils and 4 hours for our KS2 pupils. We are now adding additional lessons, sourced from the Oak Learning Academy on the learning page for each class.

I am very conscious too of the increased workload that the current situation is creating for our teaching staff. Numbers of children attending school remain extremely high, with in excess of 40% of our children in school most days, which is requiring all of our teaching staff to be on site juggling the commitment to providing face to face care as well as attending to the needs of those pupils working from home. As a small school we do not have the luxury of having additional staff that can solely focus on remote learning – in some schools with more than one form of entry they are able to use teaching staff on a rota to provide on-site and remote learning.

We have been receiving lots of feedback from parents and carers, the vast majority of which I am very pleased to report is very positive indeed. We recognise that there is currently a wide spectrum of thought on this subject ranging from some families feeling completely overwhelmed with the amount of work being set to those who would like more live lessons. When planning how we will continue to approach remote learning we will always take into account this range of views as well as considering the limitations that most of us are likely to experience.

We will be conducting a questionnaire shortly to ascertain both your view and your child’s view on the remote learning provision. Please be assured that we are working incredibly hard at the moment providing both on site and remote education against the backdrop of the worst national health crisis this country has experienced. This is a difficult time for us all and your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Michelle Cox
Head Teacher