



St. Mary's C of E School

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Dear Parents/ Carers,

I hope you all enjoyed the Easter weekend and that you are keeping well.

As we approach what should have been the beginning of the summer term, I thought I would write to keep you informed of the situation and offer some advice for home learning.

For the foreseeable future the school remains closed except to 'vulnerable' children and those of key workers who are not able to stay at home safely. If your child falls into one of these categories and you would like him/ her to attend school next week, please inform the school office by the end of Friday 17th April.

As I am sure you are aware, it is impossible at present to set a date for school to reopen fully. Therefore, we have extended our home learning scheme until at least the end of May. Many thanks to those parents who contacted the office over the last few days to share their views about home learning. We have tried to take all of them into account when planning our resources for the next few weeks. I have met 'virtually' with all the teachers this week and we have tried to produce a flexible plan that caters for all children, remembering that every family has different circumstance and can devote different amounts of time and commitment to their child's home learning.

The governors have adopted a home and online learning policy which can be read on our website and a copy of which has been attached with this letter.

It was agreed in the meeting with teachers that the main priorities for all children during the next few weeks are:-

- Reading: ask your child to read for at least 20 minutes daily. Older children can read on their own, although it is often beneficial for them to read to an adult and discuss the text and answer questions. Younger children will benefit from reading aloud to an adult. Children in Reception and Year 1 would benefit from continuing their daily phonics practice, using the recommended YouTube videos or their phonics folders.
- Times tables. A sound knowledge of the times tables facts is crucial to any maths work and these should be practised regularly to enable children to recall them at speed. Children in Year 2 and above can use the interactive computer program 'Times Tables Rock Stars' for this. Children in Year 1 can practise their number bond cards and/or their times table cards. Reception children should continue to concentrate on counting and ordering numbers to 20, saying one more/ less than given numbers and using quantities and objects to add and subtract two single-digit numbers.
- Handwriting. A few minutes' handwriting practice every day using the recommended resources would ensure that your child continues to make progress; sometimes this can be done through other subject areas.

In addition, we highly recommend the following activities which, as well as all having broad educational value, will enhance your child's mental health and general well-being:-

- Go on a long walk and look for signs of nature; maybe keep a wildlife journal.
- Do lots of drawing, painting, colouring, making models and taking photographs.
- Have calm reflective times during the day; say a prayer.
- Dance, skip, run and get lots of exercise.
- Help an adult in the garden; plant something and watch it grow.
- Chat with family and friends online; maybe do a virtual activity together.
- Write a letter/ card to somebody and post it; see if you get a reply!
- Make a cake or learn a new recipe; help to cook a meal for your family!
- Talk or write about how you feel; draw your feelings.
- Sing a song, play a musical instrument, find some new music to listen to.
- Do a jigsaw or play a board game with family members.
- Do some cleaning/ tidying/ organising.
- Do something kind for somebody.
- Think about all the things you have to be grateful for; maybe make a list.
- Have plenty of fresh air and a good night's sleep.

For more information on supporting your and your child's mental health during this time please go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

There are some parents who would like their child to complete English, maths and other academic activities each day. Your child's class teacher will provide activities for this, and the following link will explain the expected outcomes for children according to their year group:

<https://www.theschoolrun.com/home-learning-timetables-for-coronavirus-school-closures>

We would recommend that your child spends no more than an hour every day on each of English and maths activities. Some children work better with a structured timetable, and suggestions for these can also be found on the above website. Other children, however, respond better to a more flexible approach. It is important to remember that children will need plenty of breaks for food, drinks and fresh air during the day.

Following our meeting, class teachers have agreed to:-

- Send to each family an overview of suggested topics to be covered between now and the end of May; the proposed activities have been chosen either to cover new objectives which the children have not yet worked on or to revisit previously taught topics (which we do frequently in school).
- Send an email at least weekly with learning suggestions for each day of the week ahead.
- Send a daily audio file of a story/ chapter of a book with accompanying questions/ tasks (Year 2 and above).
- Send audio messages and resources so your child can hear their teacher's voice (Reception and Year 1).
- Respond to emails as frequently as possible.

In order to do all of the above and for teachers to keep track of the progress of the children in their class, every class from Year 1 upwards will be using the online package Seesaw, which Mrs Gibbs has already been using successfully with Year 6 children. Your child's teacher will set up an account for your child

during the next few days and will advise you on how to use the package. Miss Welling will continue to use Tapestry to communicate with parents and children in Violet Class.

We currently have a rota of staff working in school looking after the small number of children who are attending. This means that, every third week, your child's teacher will be working in school with other children and as such will not be able to respond to emails as frequently as during the other two weeks. The teacher will let you know when this applies to them.

We do understand that every family's situation is different and I can assure you that there will be no consequences for children who are unable to complete as much home learning as others. When school resumes, we will help children to ease back into the day-to-day routine of school life, ensuring that they work from the level they are at and start to build from there.

Finally, please watch our website every Friday for an online assembly. This is a fun way for your child to be engaged in an informal story and song and to see some of their friends from school.

Please remember that we are here to help and advise you during these difficult times. There is always someone at the end of the phone during school hours, so please do not hesitate to call. Teachers have been asked to check up on the children in their class and their families during the next few weeks, so you may get a friendly call from your child's class teacher at some point; this is nothing to worry about and is just a way of us making sure that we are supporting everyone as best we can at this time.

Look after yourselves and your families, and I will be in touch again as soon as we have any updates on the current situation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Milne