



# Fleet Primary School

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## Update - 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone continues to be safe and well. I wanted to send you another communication to update on where we currently are.

The lockdown has now been in place since the 20<sup>th</sup> March meaning we are just finishing our 6<sup>th</sup> week of closure (including the Easter Break) with many of the children having actually been off from the week before the official closure due to fears of the spread of Covid-19.

During that time I have been so heartened by the way the community has pulled together to support each other and ensure that everyone is looked after.

Despite constant speculation in the media as to when the lockdown will be eased and when schools will re-open for the children we simply do not know and there has been no official word even laying out a tentative timeline for this. What does appear to be clear is that when the lock down does ease it is likely to be a gradual process – in other words, should schools re-open before the summer, it is unlikely that it will go from closed to open for everyone. There will probably need to be some kind of gradual reintegration that allows us to put in place measures to keep everyone – children and staff – safe and avoid any subsequent increases in transmission of Covid-19.

When the Department for Education and the Government do give clearer information on a timetable for this re-opening we will of course communicate with you at all stages as to what will happen and when as we have attempted to do throughout this situation.

I would like to talk a little bit about the way we have approached this closure and the expectations I have from you as families and from my staff. Right from the beginning I tried to emphasise that the most important thing to all of us at this difficult time is to ensure that everyone's mental health and well-being is protected and supported. One of the things that makes Fleet such a brilliant community to be part of is the variety – we have families from all different parts of the world, many different languages, religions and cultures are represented. We have families from all different backgrounds. In more normal times this gives our children access to being surrounded by a real melting pot of experiences and ideas. It can make a teacher's job more difficult than if everyone was the same but that is something our staff thrive on, and speaking personally, it is what attracts me to being at Fleet. Taking this all into consideration, at a time like this these differences can become far starker. We know from our discussions with children and families that there is huge variability out there as to how you are able to manage the lockdown and at the same time provide a learning environment for your children. We expect this and it is the reason behind many of the decisions we have taken in terms of setting work and what we want the children to do. As I have said in previous letters, we do not want school to be another stressor for you on top of what is already a stressful situation.

The expectation we have is that children should spend some time each day doing some learning – now that could be work we have set, found in the weekly task lists we put on the website for the beginning of each week, or it could be something you plan to do yourself with the children. We know we have parents who are in a position to dedicate a lot of their time to 'home schooling' or are more able to put in place structured timetables at home while we have some parents, who for many reasons, be it work

commitments, language difficulties etc., have very little. You need to make what you ask your children to do, work for you. A simple rule of thumb would be, if you are becoming anxious and not able to do what you need to be doing without it putting undue strain on you and the rest of your family, you may need to think about scaling back your expectations.

The key pieces of learning are the English and Maths tasks, reading and number are the foundations of all learning. Finding time each day for the children to do some reading and number work should be achievable and in many cases something that can be done with more independence than some of the other tasks.

Equally, if you are in the situation where you are finding that you and your children are doing the work in the task list and have extra time please use the links we have sent out previously and are on the website to explore what is out there for more ideas. However, please bear in mind that when you work 1-1 with your child, an hour of that is far more intense, and the child will be doing far more than they would in a normal school day where they are sharing the teacher with 29 other children.

We do know that for some of you motivating your children to do work has been a problem. We will continue to do what we can to support you, through chatting with you and the children each week. Please be open and honest with us about what you are able to do and what you are finding difficult. We want to help where we can.

Whatever the children are doing – be it school set tasks, helping you with the cooking, drawing, playing games, going for a daily walk, whatever it is, take pictures. Share them with us by emailing the school so that we can help to celebrate what they are doing through twitter and the newsletter. We do want to know what the children are doing. When we finally come back we need to know what was covered and what wasn't so we can tailor their curriculum going forward to their individual circumstances and needs.

Finally I would like to talk about my staff. You may or may not know that while we are officially closed, school has been open everyday throughout this period (including the Easter holidays) for the children of key workers and our vulnerable families. This has been staffed by the support staff and Ms Wall and myself (and the teachers who volunteered to come in over Easter). These staff members have been brilliant providing care and support to do their bit to ensure that some of our essential services can continue.

I also want to mention the teachers. Their job and role has changed completely through this period. While struggling with the fears we all have around staying safe and well both physically and mentally, they have been working tirelessly to ensure that families have the support they need. The teachers are calling all the families in their classes 2-3 times a week, often struggling to get through and trying again and again until they do. They are responding to many emails and messages they are being sent to reassure, encourage and answer countless messages each day, as well as keeping up to date with communications from me and the rest of the senior leadership team. They are involved in weekly staff meetings via video link and some of their usual duties such as subject leads and certain training is continuing. On top of all of this they are planning tasks – trying to take into account the huge disparity in terms of access at home and support available. In all circumstances, they are also having to come to terms with a system that was never set up to be an online learning platform – the school website. What might seem like a simple thing, like uploading a video of them reading a story, can be very difficult and time consuming when you are using a home internet connection that keeps crashing! Despite all this, they are all making sure that they send everything they have for the following weeks work in time to be up on the website which myself and the admin team then co-ordinate.

I would ask you to be patient if occasionally a link doesn't work, or a file is missing or in the wrong place. As mentioned, our website was never designed to be used in this way. We are doing what we can in the current situation. Moving forward we will be investigating alternative ways of doing this and submitting work should the need ever rise again but now is not the time to be introducing a new learning platform

when so many of the school have not got consistent quality access to be able to use one. If you do find a link not working or are struggling to find a resource that is mentioned in the task list please send an email to the admin account ([admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk](mailto:admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk)). I would ask you not to email teachers directly, even if you have their individual email address. Please send it to admin. We will ensure that we follow up on your query and fix anything needing fixed as quickly as we can.

As a reminder – this is what you can expect from us and what we expect from you:

- Friday afternoon – the following week’s Task Lists will be up on the website (you will be sent a message to tell you when it is there via Parent Hub). Most resources to go with the task list will also be uploaded at this time but some may be uploaded at a later date (especially if we are having technical problems with videos etc.)
- By Monday morning – we advise you to have looked at the task list so you know what options there are
- Monday/Tuesday - teacher will call you to speak to you and your child – please use this opportunity to ask the teacher any questions you might have on the tasks for that week. Teacher can also discuss the work they will have received from you the previous week
- During the week – encourage/support your children to do any tasks from the list you are able to. Try to encourage them to at least read everyday
- Thursday/Friday – teacher will call you to speak to you and your child – good opportunity to share the successes from the week and anything you/your child found difficult – teacher can then offer support with what was difficult.
- By end of Friday – email in photos of what your child(ren) has been doing through the week to the teacher at [admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk](mailto:admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk) – you can do this at the end of the week with everything or send multiple emails throughout the week – whatever works best for you. **Please make sure that you send at least one email each week**
- At any point in the week – for questions and queries send emails to [admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk](mailto:admin@fleet.camden.sch.uk) – **please do not send to teachers directly**

On a personal note I would like to say thank you to all my staff and to all of you for making the best of this difficult situation. I have loved seeing the work the children have been doing as well as speaking to you and the children and hearing your positivity. When I have been struggling with juggling my own school duties and trying to keep my three children engaged with their home learning it’s been heartening to get the positive messages we have been receiving for the approach we have taken. It is a real team effort and you are all key to that team.

Best wishes



Don McGibbon  
Head Teacher