



Fleet Primary School

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Lockdown update

14th January 2021

Dear parent and carers,

I wanted to write to you all to hopefully offer a bit of reassurance. While school is closed the majority of our staff are working from home but we stay in communication each day as part of our support for your children, you and each other. One thing that we are noticing, and we feel this ourselves, is that concern and stress about 'home learning' is higher this time among families than it was during the first lockdown in March.

There may be many reasons for this. I know from our perspective that the expectations being put on schools from the Department for Education and the Government is much higher than March. We are also, understandably, generally more anxious in general due to the current wave of infections being higher and more transmissible than the first wave. All of these and many other factors are making us more stressed and anxious.

The government's expectations on what school should be providing means that we have altered our approach to the amount of work we are setting and also the way we approach it, the morning Zoom sessions being one example. We are constantly trying to adapt and improve our offering, but of course any changes come with added stress for us, working out how to make an improvement, and you in getting used to doing things differently. We know from our conversations with some of you that in a number of cases at times you are feeling overwhelmed – this is normal, we are too! I wanted to make a few observations and points to hopefully help with this and think about some of the things you may be feeling. So here goes...

How you might be thinking or feeling...

THE TEACHERS ARE PUTTING UP LOTS OF WORK AND EXPECTING US TO DO IT ALL WITH OUR CHILDREN AND THAT ISN'T FAIR!

We absolutely understand that it is not possible to support distance learning with young children and work in full capacity from home at the same time which many of you are trying to do. Some workplaces will be very understanding about this and others will not! If you're trying to do that, stop! It will just lead to high levels of stress for you which will rub off on your children. Identify the most important things for your child to achieve in their learning and prioritise those. These will differ in relation to your child's needs. If you are struggling to cover all the work and are unsure of what you should focus on the most for your child just ask the class teacher and they will be able to guide you. Discuss with the teacher what the child should be able to do more independently and what they might need support with and plan around it. Generally, reading should be done every day (this can be independent) while maths and English tasks too should take priority.

SOMEONE IN MY CHILD'S CLASS IS EASILY COMPLETING ALL THE WORK AND MY CHILD ISN'T MANAGING TO DO THIS. WILL MY CHILD FALL BEHIND?

It is important to remember that even if everything were equal in terms of support, time and number of children in the family (which it's not) all children learn at different rates. The teachers have provided work that is able to be adapted for different levels wherever possible but this is obviously more challenging through remote learning than it is in the classroom. As with all of this just do your best and if you are unsure liaise with the class teacher. They will be able to guide you on which areas your child needs to focus on the most if they are unable to complete all of the work. Remember that the education system in our

country is designed to allow as many people as possible to go to work. In many other countries children do not access formal education until later but go on to be just as successful. Life learning is equally valuable. Also remember that you are not the only person in your situation. There will be many others like you across the UK and other countries! As we did in September, when the children come back, we will look at where they are at and put support in place to address any gaps that may have arisen.

WHAT IF I FIND IT EASIER TO TEACH MY CHILD IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

You are the one supporting your child's learning at home so feel free to adapt it to suit your situation and your children. The home learning situation needs to be as fun and stress free as you can make it for your child and yourself. If possible try to submit the work that the teachers have specifically highlighted as key tasks as these will be key to informing teachers as they plan the next lessons and often build from one day to the next. Activities such as cooking, gardening, lego, sharing books, playing games, communicating virtually with friends and families etc. are all valuable opportunities for children's learning.

I'M GETTING STRESSED - HOW CAN I GET THREE DIFFERENT LOTS OF WORK DONE WITH 3 DIFFERENT CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT AGES?

You can't, stop trying! I know this is my situation and I'm trying to work too – it just can't be done 100% of the time and I need to stop beating myself up and expecting I can – if I feel that way and I am a trained teacher you need to cut yourself some slack. If they're old enough, try to get them to work independently where possible. Otherwise try to do something they can all engage with, reading a story together, some free writing, baking etc. Older children teaching younger children. Liaise with class teachers as outlined above to establish the priorities to aim to achieve as a minimum with each child. If you are still not coping don't just struggle and feel bad – tell us.

MY CHILD IS REFUSING TO DO THE WORK THAT HAS BEEN SET. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Let the class teacher or teaching assistant know when they call or email us. No one is going to judge you if you are having problems. You are their parent not their class teacher so it is fine if you need our support in helping your child to engage with the work that has been set. Together we can usually come up with a strategy to move things forward.

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF SCREEN TIME MY CHILD IS HAVING.

We recognise that screen time for many, myself included, is something we try and limit with our children. Yet, due to the nature of home learning delivery the children are spending a lot of time looking at screens. We try to give a balance between activities that they need to do on screen – watching a teaching resource for example or doing some research – with activities they can do off screen – writing, drawing, reading etc. Try to mix things up, even if work can be done online, it doesn't mean it has to be. Instead of typing a piece of English, they can write it and take a photo at the end to submit. Encourage them to take frequent breaks through the day from the screen. If they are children who tend to spend their leisure time playing games on screens then they will be on screens longer than usual. It is always worth reminding them of this and sticking to 'normal' time restrictions if you have them, when it comes to their free time.

WILL THE SCHOOL DO ANYTHING IF WE DON'T DO THE WORK WITH OUR CHILDREN?

Yes – we will make contact with you. The government have put an expectation on us to follow up on children who are not accessing their education or are available to be contacted to discuss their work and be able to feedback to. Please don't get upset with us, we are just doing our job! We will do everything that we can to support you.

I'M STILL NOT HAPPY/NEED HELP. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Contact your child's class teacher via the usual ways. Be aware that they are obviously dealing with a high level of contact from parents and children at the moment so if you don't get a response straight away please be patient.

Remember - You are doing your best. You are loving your children and supporting them through a difficult time. Look after yourself. Minimising stress is absolutely vital in a time like this for mental health. Don't let this be something that stresses you; not everything is in your circle of control.

Also remember – the staff are doing their very best in difficult circumstances, and many like you and I are doing so while managing their own families at home. Most staff are stuck at home trying to work with substandard internet and facing the same lockdown restriction problems you all are. We wish your children were in school with us. We wish they were all able to come to school each day as normal. We are passionate about providing the very best that we can for our children and Fleet community in the face of whatever restrictions and barriers we have to face.

If you have any worries or concerns it is really important that you share these with the school. Let's all try to keep each other positive and not drag each other down! We will get through this and our amazing children are the most resilient of all! We were so impressed with how the children bounced back and got used to being back in school in September and we see no reason why, when this lockdown is finished, it will be any different.

We have added a page to the school website with resources we have found useful, and hope you will too, around mental health and wellbeing and keep an eye out in the newsletter each week as we add in stuff in there each week too.

<https://www.fleet.camden.sch.uk/parents/mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Above all, remind yourself you can only do what you can do. For any of you who happen to listen to the same popular radio podcast that I do each week they have a couple of quotes they use a lot that have often offered me comfort during this pandemic. One is, 'Everything will be alright in the end...and if it's not, it's not the end!' and the other one is from none other than Tom Hanks, who when interviewed talked about his mantra for tough times, 'This too shall pass'. He is not wrong.

Wishing you our very best wishes,



Don M'Gibbon
Head Teacher