



Your ref:

Our ref:

Tel no:

Email:

Date: 11th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

On the 8th January I wrote to you following the Government's decision to close schools to all but vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Since that time schools have been working tirelessly to ensure that children working at home get a high-quality learning offer in line with the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines.

I have been delighted to hear of all the messages of support and gratitude received by our schools from parents. Head teachers and school staff truly appreciate this recognition of their hard work. Many barriers have had to be overcome, too numerous to mention, but knowing that their work is recognised has made a huge difference to staff morale at a difficult time.

As we near half term, I would like to say a huge well done to the children for making such rapid adjustments within their lives and to how they are learning. I am hearing from schools that they are very proud of them and are looking forward to having them back in school again as soon as it is safe to do so. I also wanted to say a big thank you to parents, carers and other family members who have ensured that children have been able to continue their studies. Without doubt, this has been challenging, particularly for those of you juggling working at home yourself, coping with children in different stages of their education and the DfE's expectations, to ensure that your children get the opportunity to continue study without compromising their health and mental wellbeing.

The demands that are being placed on families and schools at this time are considerable and parents rightly have concerns about educational progress. I am aware however that there has been some confusion in regard to remote learning and what schools should be offering.

Schools without exception are doing the best they can to provide the highest quality education that circumstances will allow, they do however face very different challenges. It is not reasonable therefore to compare the offer made by different schools. The national guidance is that:

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- Pupils should be set meaningful and ambitious work across a range of subjects
- Lessons will include a mix of either:
 - Recorded lessons and time for pupils to complete tasks
 - Live lessons and time for pupils to complete tasks
 - Or a mix of the three elements
- Recorded lessons will not necessarily be of teaching staff in school • Schools should consider how to transfer into remote education as much good practice as possible
- Schools should consider and adapt lesson time, content and delivery to meet the age, stage and needs of pupils
- There is no expectation that the provision is solely digital

I would therefore ask parents to consider carefully the above guidance as they seek to challenge schools where they feel the quality of provision is not what they had expected. I would also ask that you take account of the fact that teachers are investing many hours into lesson development at present, as they are teaching their classes in school, whilst also providing remote learning for those pupils at home and, whilst it may seem an obvious solution to live stream from classrooms, this is not always practicable.

Should you have any questions about your child's home learning then I encourage you to raise these in the first instance with your child's school. This will enable a constructive dialogue about why the school has chosen to deliver remote education in the way it has, taking into account the individual circumstances of each school. The vast majority of issues can be dealt with by a quick exchange with a teacher or other member of staff before taking any formal steps. This approach is much more likely to lead to a positive outcome for all.

At the moment, the earliest we will see a return to school-based teaching for most pupils is 8th March. In the meantime, I wish you all a relaxing half term break and look forward to welcoming back the children into school very soon.

Yours sincerely

Sue Harrison

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