

15th January 2021

Dear Parents

What a start to the year!!

Firstly, for those of you whose children are at home – congratulations! I am hearing that there is much home learning being shared with the teachers, which is amazing.

Many families have found some sort of rhythm to the days and the daily timetables are making it more do-able. I know for those of you who are also trying to work that it's a particularly difficult time. Remember, not all the work needs to be supervised. Please read instructions or set your child up with the suggested activity and then leave them to it for a while, perhaps with the odd checking in.

We are keen that children remain independent learners so you are truly not expected to be tutors by their sides. If you have several children at home, set up the most willing child or the one who needs the least explanation first and then go to the next, which may make things simpler.

If your child tends to 'faff around', it may help them to have a set time in which they are expected to start or to have completed things – a timer on the cooker may help. Perhaps they can then have a few minutes to choose what they'd like to do as a break afterwards eg read a book for 10 minutes or so; watch a short TV clip; or even better, play. This may motivate them to start, knowing there is a reward at the end.

Play is really important to children (of all ages) and that it helps their learning. If playing with someone else, they develop their language skills and, even if alone, they will be having time for learning or thinking to 'percolate'! It certainly isn't wasting time and something that is central to the early years and key stage one curriculum.

For children who are reluctant home learners, try giving them a bit of choice about what happens first. There may need to be a bit of deal making. Remember, you know your children best so you might want them to do their least favourite tasks first so they are done.

Try not to do too much correcting of work for the children or be too exacting. Older children do need to proof-read their writing but usually we ask that just a few spellings (primarily common words) are corrected on a piece. They use phonics knowledge to sound out many words and these may not resemble true words in year R-1/2 – we call them phonetically plausible spellings. We suggest that you ask children to re-read their work to you – which helps you understand what they meant!

The teachers are loving the zoom conversations and seeing work come in. In order to make things manageable, however, they cannot always respond individually. Home learners' individual email responses are taking teachers the equivalent of a whole working day so I am encouraging teachers to share next steps in learning either via zoom or to inform subsequent days' planning.

We are delighted with the responses for the daily learning timetables. These take much longer than normal as we have our own shorthand and teacher speak, which might be unintelligible for another reader! Thank you for your encouragement.

Finally, please be aware of the need to keep an eye on your children's IT usage. There is information on the school website to help you guide your children. Do ensure that parental settings are on all devices to keep the children safe.

This letter is not to critique you but just some suggestions. You are doing a great job if your child is doing some daily learning.

As long as we remain well, we will do our best to continue to support all the children. Please send our love to those of them who are at home – we miss them all and would much prefer them (and us) not to be living through this.

Take care.

Best wishes

Fiona