



Dear Parents and Carers,

While we head through the second week of what can only be described as bizarre, scary and out of our control, I understand we have many worried, overwhelmed and stressed children, parents and staff. Only two weeks ago, teachers due diligently prepared work packs for the coming weeks, as the education sector knew it would not be long before Boris had to shut down schools. What this really meant no one really knew, but as educators, we knew it meant sending home, work for the children to complete. Are teachers across the country really expecting parents to take on the role of teacher? Are children really expected to learning everything they need to before coming back to school?

Only this evening, while trying to support my niece with work on angles, using commas to avoid ambiguity and researching Frank Gehry via Skype, I found myself saying those words that all teachers during training are told never to use; “were you actually listening to anything I just said”, “seriously how did you get that answer”, “well that’s not right, do that again”. With four years of training and over 20 years of experience, I can completely see how home-schooling is stressful!!!

Reading through guidance and information from the Government and the Local Authority, I came across a Headteacher, who seemed to sum up my thoughts exactly:

1) This is not home-schooling. This is an unprecedented emergency situation impacting on the whole world. Home-schooling is normally a choice, something you considered, something you perhaps planned with your child's teacher. This is, at best, distance learning. In reality, it is everyone trying to separate their bums from their elbows, because none of us know what we're doing and what's right and wrong here.

2) You are, and always have been, your child's primary educator. If you decide that your child isn't going to engage with everything sent home and is going to spend time playing in the dirt, or baking, or watching TV, then that is your choice. That is your right. There is nothing to stress or feel guilty about.

3) Schools don't really know what they're doing either. They had no notice, no preparation time and we were NOT told to 'continue to plan lessons as normal and just send them home' – that's NOT possible. If it were, we'd all be out of a job!

4) *It is absolutely not possible to facilitate distance learning with a primary aged child and work from home at the same time. The very idea is nonsense. If you're trying to do that, stop now. You can certainly have activities where your child learns, but your focus is your job, and survival. Again, unprecedented. Stop trying to be superheroes.*

*So, what does that really mean for children and parents from Trimley St Martin?
If you are asking:*

- Am I really expected to go through all the work sent home?. Pages and pages, hours and hours?

No is the answer.... It is not a competition, or a race, it is what you and your child can manage.

I have seen some wonderful examples of children with a daily timetable: AM- school work, with regular breaks just like being at school.. PM- family school activities, i.e. art, DT projects, football in the garden: some of which are linked to the work sent out on our topic mats, evening- being a family!! (The normal stuff- it is important to be as normal as possible in such an abnormal time). Having a daily timetable or routine can give children a sense of normality, as my niece told me, "it gives me something to do and I won't get bored". The feedback so far from children and parents are they are enjoying the work set and the regular challenges and work sent out by their teachers.

- How can I get three different lots of work done with 3 different kids of different ages?

You can't, stop trying. If they're old enough, try to get them to do bits independently. (I know that many teachers are at the end of Seesaw and can answer many of your child's questions, you don't have to do this on your own).

- So what's the bare minimum you'd expect?

For me, ANYTHING!. I just want happy, healthy children to return to school when this is all over. I want children that will be eager to learn from their teachers; I want children that do not need nurture groups or nurses referrals because they have returned to school with mental health issues.

I want MY CHILDREN back!!!!

My ideal for the children in our school?

-Yes have a go at the work sent out... it is important, the teachers have spent ages getting it ready.....BUT, do not let it stress you or your child out, make family life an issue, become something that becomes too unmanageable...

Why not also try...

-A bit of reading every day (independent or to them)

- Practical hands on maths. Be that via cooking, cleaning, outside or some maths games, physical or digital.

- Some fine motor work. Lego, cutting, or playdough.

- Physical exercise everyday.... Don't forget Joe Wicks every morning at 9am...

- Some art/music where possible through the week.

Remember, you are doing enough. Loving and supporting your children through such a difficult time is enough.

Mrs Ross

Headteacher