

Thursday 7th January 2021

Dear Parents and Friends of Castle Hill,

Having found out at exactly the same time as the rest of the nation that schools were to close the next day, we are now in a position to be able to share with you our plan for onsite and remote learning over the coming weeks.

The scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. **If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.** That is why the Government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. There are no criteria saying that it has to be one or two parents, however if one parent is able to stay at home and look after the children this is strongly advised. If you decided to send your child to school, we are expecting them to attend everyday as they would normally. The reason for this is that it allows our teaching staff to track pupil attendance, uptake of learning progress more effectively and reduce disruption for the classroom dynamics.

We were pleased to have positive feedback from you regarding the Department for Education (DfE) Oak Academy lessons which has allowed our staff a crucial window of time to adapt their class and remote teaching plans. We are sure at times we will face some IT teething problems as we get underway and we would like to ask for your patience as we do this. Your support to date has always been second to none and is greatly appreciated.

Please also continue to show all staff the respect and consideration that they deserve while they work through the hundreds of communications and daily calls. You want the very best for your children and rest assured that we're on the same page with this mission.

Below is the guidance issued by the DfE in relation to remote education:

When teaching pupils remotely, we expect schools to:

- set assignments so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects
- set work that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. As the DfE states, for Primary school pupils, 3 hours a day should be the average across the school cohort
- provide frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources or videos
- have systems for checking, at least weekly, whether pupils are engaging with their work and inform parents immediately where engagement is a concern
- gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum using questions and other suitable tasks, and provide feedback, at least weekly, using digitally facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate
- enable teachers to adjust the pace or difficulty of what is being taught in response to questions or assessments, including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations to ensure pupils' understanding



The second bullet point states that 3 hours a day should be the average across the school cohort. This does not mean that a teacher will be talking to your child for 3 hours whilst online. I think we can all agree that it would be unreasonable for any child to be asked, especially our younger pupils, to sit and listen for 3 hours without any break for tasks or change of activities. Likewise, expecting our oldest children to do the same will see our numbers logging in for online learning quickly disappearing as boredom rapidly sets in. We are facing challenges with this new way of working, as are you, so please do not worry if there are glitches in the first few weeks. Through partnership, we will get through this journey together. If you have any technical issues with accessing the remote learning, please contact your class teacher so that we can understand the nature of your problem and work together to find a solution.

Whilst we are offering 3 hours of learning a day, individual teams will post weekly or daily timetables. We are working as key stages across both sites. KS2 (3-6) may look slightly different to KS1 (1-2) which again may look slightly different to EYFS (Year R). This is largely down to the children's maturity, their ability to work independently, prior learning experience and concentration spans. For example, you may see more short tasks for our younger pupils while at KS2 activities will be longer and require more independence.

Remote learning

Class Dojo is our main communication platform. At 9am an outline of the day's learning activities will be posted by the class teacher to the class Dojo account. This will direct pupils to their videos and activities on either Google Classroom or Seesaw.

Each day, we will provide a video of a teacher (from their year group team) delivering the input for each core subject. Children need to watch this before beginning the attached task. These videos allow the children to pause at set points to carry out tasks before moving on, replay areas that they need help with and access at a time that works for your home circumstances and availability of shared IT equipment. We realise this will be stressful as well! However, we do ask that you follow the outlined order of tasks to the best of your ability to enable us to effectively feedback and communicate with your child.

Teachers will be online from 9am- 3pm. They will be taking a lunchbreak, as they would normally, between 12-1pm so they will not be online at these times as they have duties and pupils in school to oversee.

Our first video posts will be uploaded on Friday 8th January at 9am and these will then continue the week commencing Monday 11th January. Mondays to Thursdays will have a clear focus on the academics of both core and foundation subjects with many activities being carried out on screens and our pupils sat for longer periods. Therefore, Fridays will take a slightly different format with the focus upon physical, emotional and creative wellbeing. These tasks can be undertaken independently following an online introduction. This will then provide staff with crucial planning, marking and assessment time. Therefore, apart from the daily registration, staff will not be available on Fridays. Friday 8th January is the first run of this way of working and the teachers will seek your feedback (constructive please).

Once we are up and running, we will be in touch, as will teachers, to give you more information.

Attendance

All staff want to see the children every day and we also have a statutory commitment to track attendance. From Monday 11th January, we will be taking live, online daily registers with the pupils. They will need to log on at their set time for a **brief chat** with their class teacher and peers. We cannot overstate the power of a good routine and to this end, it might be worth considering the children actually putting on school uniform and finding a set place in the home



ready for 'registration' with their teacher each day. For those of you who are dealing with many siblings, we recognise this is not an easy task and only offer as a suggestion to support you with the home school partnership. While we realise this could be difficult for some families, we appreciate your support in maintaining the crucial connection between your child working at home and their class teacher.

Outlined below is the time for each year group. The Zoom link to this meeting will be posted by the class teacher each day alongside the daily outline on Dojo. Should your child be unable to attend, please send a message to their class teacher via Dojo to let them know as you would if your child was not in school.

Year Group	Zoom Times
Year 6	9:00 - 9:15
Year 5	9:15 - 9:30
Year 4	9:30 - 9:45
Year 3	9:45 - 10:00
Year 2	10:00 - 10:15
Year 1	10:15 - 10:30
EYFS (Year R)	Will outline their approach via Dojo

If we do not see your child in school or online then we will endeavour to contact you, predominantly to check that you are all OK. In the first instance, you will be contacted by the class teacher. If they are unable to reach you, our admin team or pastoral leads (Mrs Shephard and Mrs Mundeel) will try to make contact. If we fail to make contact after these attempts, then we will notify Children's Services as part of our statutory duty of care to the children. We know that you will maintain contact and keep us informed.

To conclude, after another intense week the true spirit of Castle Hill has come through yet again. The emails and letters of support that have been coming in regularly really do keep staff morale up. I want to put on record, my own personal thanks to the team (who indeed all have their own demanding home circumstances) for stepping up and being second to none.

Stay safe and best wishes,

Mr Martin and the CHPS Team

John DF Martin
Executive Headteacher