

24th April 2020

Hello to our students, parents, families, and carers.

We hope that you are keeping well. Thank you so much for your work with us over the last few weeks.

We are coming to the end of our first week of **Phase Two** of our virtual learning platform. We call this **"Retrieve, Stimulate, Enrich."** We want to touch base with you all to ensure further clarity as we go through this new process together.

We absolutely understand how challenging this is for you at home. An hour's homework with our own children was enough to change the mood in the house, so we can imagine that 3 or 4 hours learning is testing to say the least.

However, at this point in time, our aim is to ensure our children are supported to remember the learning that they have already done. In the classroom we call this retrieval. We also want them to think more broadly around the topics that they have been studying. This will really help to firm their understanding and enable them to apply what they know to a range of situations and questions. In the classroom we call this stimulate. At this point we are not introducing new elements of the curriculum because we absolutely want those to be taught by our experts so that each child gets the feedback, support and opportunity to question and develop their understanding at the point of learning.

As you might imagine, each family will approach this slightly differently. Some families are really comfortable with virtual platforms and for others, this is quite a new thing. Please keep in mind we are all learning together here. However, it absolutely is our responsibility to get this as effective as we possibly can as we go along and we are talking and responding every day with our Heads of Departments to get greater refinement.

We thought you might find the following FAQ's useful based on conversations we have had with families over the last few days. May we thank you all for your positivity, support and goodwill. Please be assured we are listening and responding.

1. How many hours a day should my child be spending on virtual learning?

We have designed a programme that supports 2-3 hours of directed learning a day. We would like to think our children are up and doing this in the mornings. We want to see the children accessing enrichment activity in the afternoon. We have provided a list of activities for enrichment however you can decide as a family what works for you. Some children have been on virtual tours, some helping at home, some watching documentaries, others just enjoying reading. It is also worth keeping in mind that our older children have more experience with learning stamina than our younger children so perhaps, worth bearing that in mind.

2. How do I know which task to access and in what order?

We have labelled all our tasks either Retrieve, Stimulate or Enrich. We would like each child to access at least one of each of these a day. This will ensure that their memory, thinking and responding skills are well practised before their return to the classroom. Some children may want to do more and this is fine. What would really help us is if you as the adult in the house could ensure that a range of subjects are covered. We have put a suggested timetable on our school website. This is not to say that children should be doing 5 subjects per day, but it does give you an idea of the spread of subjects. In school, the children have more lessons of English, Maths and Science over a fortnight. So, if you can, encourage the weighting to suit that. However, if this is a subject that your child or you are struggling to support please don't worry about it.

3. Why are you not insisting on 5 lessons a day like a normal school day?

When children are in a classroom they have immediate access to their teacher and other learners around them. There is discussion, Q and A, modelling, thinking, reading, writing, and constant feedback. At this point in time we cannot recreate that with such short notice. As such we want to ensure that nothing is lost from their working memory and that they are thinking each day. Our hope is that over a fortnight they will have spent some time in each of their subject areas.

4. Can my child fall behind in a subject if they don't do the work?

Your child will not fall behind in any subject if they don't complete a task set on Satchel One/SMHW. It is possible that they may fall out of the good learning habits they have acquired over the years. However, this is easily retrievable! One week of good routines in school and we will be back on track. Lockdown is the chance to develop deeper love and interest in topics. The tasks are designed to stimulate new thinking and retrieve older learning. We are not setting tasks that are directly connected to the examinations or assessments. Please do not worry about this. As long as they are educationally active each day, they will be well prepared to return to the classroom as soon as we are able to. If the Lockdown goes on longer than we anticipate, we, along with government advisors and educational experts will redesign our provision for our children.

5. I'm really struggling to get my child motivated and into a routine of learning.

It is challenging especially when families are dealing with the Coronavirus, isolation, caring for relatives, being a single parent, having other siblings in the house, working shifts. We absolutely understand. You plan your day to fit your household during these difficult times. Where possible, try to get a routine. Our children will feel so much more comfortable returning to school if they feel they have not forgotten how to use the skills they have already learned in their classrooms. Gentle persuasion rather than day to day arguments is probably easier for all members of the house. We know it's not easy but try not to lose sight of the bigger picture.

6. SMHW is giving me notifications that work is not done and this is stressing my child out.

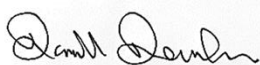
We're sorry about this. It's a system that is not use to this much use and sometimes the automatic functions kick in before we do. The system is not refined enough just yet for our needs. It is improving though so please bear with us. Again, don't worry. We are not measuring or judging how much work is not done. If you could just support a routine across a range of subjects over a fortnight that would be a huge help for us at this end.

7. Will my child get recognition for the work they are doing?

Yes. We met last week to discuss what was appropriate and manageable for teachers as they work from home with the same family and childcare challenges as you. Our children will receive support and encouragement on their tasks in each subject area. Sometimes this will be to a class or a group of learners and sometimes it will be more specifically one to one. For example, where an extended task has been completed. Many of our teachers are regularly and consistently on SMHW with their students, checking in with them and answering queries. Some tasks in maths, science, MFL and P.E are self-marked so your child will be able to see how accurate their response is. The feedback, however, is not as it would be for a formal assessment as this is not necessary at this point.

Please stay safe and we will keep in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Ms D Dearden and Mr N Bracken
Assistant Headteachers