



# WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

Elsdon Avenue, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland NE25 0BP

Tel: 0191 2371402 Fax: 0191 2371830

Email: [admin@whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk](mailto:admin@whytrig.northumberland.sch.uk)

[www.svf.org.uk](http://www.svf.org.uk)

**Executive Headteacher:** John Barnes

**Head of School:** Jonathan Souter

24 April 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

Usually at this time of year I would be writing to you or sending a Newsletter, hoping that you had had a lovely Easter break and to inform you how our first week back at school had gone. So in that respect, I really do hope you all had as good an Easter fortnight as you possibly could under the circumstances. I do also hope that our children managed to get some rest, away from the daily home school work that is being set.

As the Summer Term is now underway, the children will hopefully be getting back to daily learning and I would like to take this opportunity to address this with you. We recognise that many children will be struggling with the changes that have occurred to their routine and the way in which they are currently learning, even the most confident. We also recognise the many challenges families face around home learning at this time too, given not every home circumstances are the same.

Learning should take place on a daily basis and we feel should last between 3 and 4 hours. It should include regular English and Maths activities, as well as some learning from other subjects and a daily amount of reading. However, as we have said previously, this time is also an excellent opportunity for children to explore other life skills and as a family; baking, cooking, gardening, helping around the home for example. Home learning does not have to be, nor should it be, in a continuous block. Regular breaks in between activities are advisable as well as being a good opportunity to get some fresh air now that the weather is improving; Government guidance on social distancing should be followed at all times! Don't forget, some form of daily physical exercise is very important, so if you can't get out there are lots of regular daily keep fit activities for the children to engage with too!

To facilitate the learning, staff have been setting work through Google Classroom. As I have explained previously, this is something that is quite new to us all and we certainly don't have everything right yet, but I can assure you that staff are working extremely hard using this platform to ensure that we set the right amount of work and it is appropriate for home learning. Where we can, work will be set through Google Classroom. The work might include tasks that the staff have created or they might direct you to other learning that has been created for the national population, for example in BBC Bitesize or The National Oak Academy. Some work might be set in other platforms that we subscribe to as a school, so it is always worth checking in those locations too, such as Pearson Maths for our Key Stage 3 children. We are trying to make learning new, as much as it is possible.

Google Classroom allows staff to schedule work, so that it appears in a child's classroom on a given date. With this in mind, we would ask children to check in on a daily basis. So don't panic if you can't see work for a whole week, it might be down to the scheduling. Where there have been any issues with the scheduling of work, and things have not been right, I would ask you to bear with us. We do appreciate your support in this matter and thank you for all the constructive and positive comments we have received around this. Our Google Classroom also allows contact to take place between teaching staff and the children if they have any queries regarding their work, or for staff to give feedback. I would kindly ask that messages to staff are appropriate to the tasks in hand, so that they do not get overloaded with non-specific emails from children, no matter how well intentioned, which will divert their attention from answering work related queries. We are currently investigating ways of creating the opportunity for the general daily chat between pupils and teachers, which is of course, so important



too. I would also respectfully ask for any parents, carers or adults supporting the children with their work, that they do not use the classroom messaging facility to contact staff and that all communications are through the usual channel of the School Gateway service or school admin email. The messaging facility is for communications between pupil and teacher, and with it should be appropriately the same as the conversations that would take place between them if we were all in school. Your support in this matter is very much appreciated.

Where work has been set through Google Classroom, when it is returned to staff they can see what your child has done. When their work is marked as returned, that is the indication to the children that it has been seen by the member of staff. For some activities it might also be appropriate for staff to give feedback, to address a learning misconception or make suggestions for the children to improve their work, or maybe just to give well deserved praise. Not all activities will be scored, and once again, this is part of the staff learning curve when setting work (the default setting in Google Classroom is for a score of 100 to be applied), so please don't always expect a score as this might just have been missed when the lesson was created.

In order to support the children's use of Google Classroom, here are some helpful tips that our staff have discovered since we started using it:

- The children need to access each classroom as the staff are now setting lessons through the individual folders on their classroom in most cases.
- The classroom names are taken from how they appear on the school timetable (which is a technical issue) so please help them to understand which one is which if you can. For example, 6W\_En\_2019 is a Year 6 English class.
- The children should check the lesson dates and due dates on the assignments – please make sure they are completed on the correct days and handed in by the due time.
- The children must make sure they read the instructions carefully. Please help them with this if it is needed. This will avoid the need to generate message traffic for things that have already been asked or previously explained.
- Please make sure all the tasks are completed before they are handed in.
- The children must click the 'hand in' button on the assignment screen when they have finished their work, otherwise their teachers will not be aware that the task has been completed.
- Please ensure the children hand in work only through the Google Classroom, otherwise it will not show as being completed and we can not show it as being marked.
- We only expect the children to try their best. It would be great if they attempt the task even if they find it difficult.

We hope you find this information useful and that it helps the children with their work as we start a new week on Monday. I would like to reassure you of our continued commitment to supporting you and your family as much as we can at this time. Our aim is to make this situation the best as it possibly can be for the children and their families. I hope you all have a very good weekend and stay healthy and safe.

Yours sincerely

Jon Souter

Head of School