



# WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

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**Executive Headteacher:** John Barnes

**Head of School:** Jonathan Souter

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Dear Parent or Carer

We do hope this finds you and your family well at this time. We have had another busy week in school (both the physical and virtual) and we are again grateful to all the staff, pupils and parents who are doing all they can to make this time as productive and successful as possible.

## Online Learning

We are trying to provide a range of online learning activities for the children to access each week which will include pre-recorded material (from our staff and some from external sources), material from national organisations and written tasks. This week we have also added in some more live lessons in some classes which have worked quite well. We have been asked by some parents and children if we can do even more live lessons instead of having recorded lessons and we do understand why, as it is the interaction between pupils and staff in a learning environment that we are all missing at this point in time. However, a school has to ensure the learning is as accessible to everyone as it can be; one of the issues that arises from having live lessons is that they would need to be at a set time each day and problems can be created for children who don't have access to a computer at that time causing them to miss the lesson (for example in cases where there is only one device in a household and it is needed by several people, which may include parents for work related matters). By using a recording in the lesson, or giving instructions in text with clear steps, we can ensure everyone can access their learning at a time that fits in with the needs of their home environment; we now have a number of staff who are now creating their own recordings of lessons and whilst we appreciate the videos aren't the same as being in class, the ones we record cover the things the children need to learn with that personal touch from someone they know. Some recordings are longer than others but the reason for is so that everything that needs to be covered is covered; recordings can be paused, for example, when there are activities to complete or to practise the skills that are being taught; rewind if something needs going over again; children can take time away from a recording at any point, for example for a rest if they need one and come back to them at a later time so the advantages of setting online learning in this way are significant. However, we are nonetheless trying to strike a balance of the type of material set over the course of a week to provide a little variety. Staff have also looked at using additional software this week to add recorded voice comments on to work instead of typing up feedback when work is submitted as well as adding text captions to recordings so that the needs of all of our learners are covered. In many ways we are all on a massive learning journey, with lots of us at different points on that road. From conversations with children in school this week, we are learning about some of the issues the children are experiencing with Google Classroom which we were unaware of, mainly because of what the children see on their screens is different to what the teachers see on their screens; our plan is to start to create short help videos which will demonstrate the typical routines they should adopt in Google Classroom and guide them through some of the common problems.

## Scheduled Work

Staff usually schedule work so it appears at a set time in the child's Google Classroom, usually on the day the lesson would normally be timetabled. We have had some queries this week from parents whose children are worried when work is not completed on time and our response has been, **please don't worry!** The due date we set is to enable some sort of routine (as much for ourselves as for the children) but we are well aware that circumstances are not the same for all children in every household; for example, access to a device required to complete work might be when a parent has finished work. We would just ask that staff are kept informed of any problems if and when they arise.

## Pupil Engagement

As you will know, teaching and support staff have again been working hard over the last week to ensure that all pupils engage in the remote learning that is in place. Where there are concerns that there is no or little engagement, staff have been contacting parents or carers to find out if there is anything we can do to help.

Teaching staff will continue to review the work completed by children in each subject at the end of each week, which will inform any decisions we make to contact parents or carers in the following week. It has been pleasing to see an improvement in engagement by a number of pupils this week and we hope this continues moving forward. We would again like to remind children that they should always 'hand in' their work with evidence of their work as requested by their teacher because if they do not do so we will not know the online learning has been completed. We would just like to say a massive well done to everyone who is submitting work regularly. Just remember – children need to also spend a good part of their day away from screens too!

### **Message From Year 5 Staff To Year 5 Pupils**

Thanks to those who have attended 5M and 5B's class meetings. (5C's will take place early next week.) They will take place every week but not always on the same day (due to staff school commitments.) The meeting links will be posted in the Year 5 Information Class. Teachers are aiming to answer all the questions they get but questions need to be more specific (for example not like "I don't get it")! Oak Academy and BBC Bitesize are also good resources if you need online tutorials. However, if children are really struggling, even after exploring those options, leave that lesson and move on. Staff will review any missed learning in class when we get back so there is no need to worry!

### **Remote Learning Surveys**

We have greatly appreciated many of the emails sent in by parents or carers with feedback, both positive and some negative, which has allowed us to look at our provision and how we could improve it. We felt as a Senior Leadership Team it would be beneficial to have all of this information in the same place in the form of a parent questionnaire, so we sent one out earlier in the week. Already we have had some further queries, which hopefully some of the points in this letter address. If you have not yet completed the survey (we require one for each child attending our school in case their experiences differ) please do so by accessing the online form at <https://forms.gle/t5UfdjDmu5CCUfF47>. We will also be surveying the children for their views over the course of next week which will be done through their Google Classroom accounts.

### **School Assemblies**

On Monday we scheduled our first virtual assembly through the Year Group Information classes in each year. This allows us to share information as well as looking at themes that we would normally share in a whole school assembly environment. Future assemblies will be scheduled for Monday mornings, however on some weeks there will be extra assemblies to cover special dates, for example there will be one on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January as it is Holocaust Memorial Day. School assemblies do not appear as 'assignments' so there is nothing for the children to hand in on those days; they should just watch the videos which may create opportunities for discussion in the home.

### **Stars Of The Week**

We are really pleased to have the Stars of the Week system up and running this week, even if it is virtually. Teaching staff have nominated children from their online classes as well as from the children attending our in school provision. The results will be shared in Google Classroom each week on a Friday.

### **Accelerated Reader**

Mrs Linney would like to remind children about the Spring Term1 competition for Accelerated Reader. Children should be reading everyday, just as if they were in school and using the Accelerated Reader software to quiz when they have finished their book. If children haven't got a reading book, they can use myOn to read and take the quiz through there. They will need to accept their Accelerated Reader classroom, as all the information for logins and competitions are in there.

### **Federation and School Website**

As stated in previous communications, information will regularly be sent out to parents and uploaded on the school website at <https://www.svf.org.uk/news/2021-01-05-covid-19-updates>. Please check this page often in case messages are missed. We would again like to remind parents and carers to update any changes to their contact information, especially around changes to email addresses at this current time.

We would again like to emphasise, by working together we can hopefully reduce the stresses placed upon everyone at this difficult time, especially upon our young people! We hope everyone has a fantastic weekend and a very well deserved rest!

Yours sincerely

Mr J K Souter  
Head of School