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LODDON JUNIOR SCHOOL
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Dear Parents and Carers,

The message at the moment from the government is 'Stay at Home'. If you are a Key Worker, and you are unable to work if your child does not attend school, then school is open for them. I am trying to keep as many of my staff working from home as possible, to keep them as safe as possible. Please only send your child in if absolutely necessary.

People can feel stressed, overwhelmed and under pressure by everything that's happening at the moment. This may also include the work being sent home for your child. I wanted to just give my perspective on it as a Headteacher with children and I hope this can help.

A few points to note first:

1) This is not home-schooling. 'Home-schooling' is a choice, where you consider, you plan, and you choose to remove your child from school and teach them at home. This is however, an unprecedented emergency situation impacting the whole world, and we are trying to provide your children with distance learning. Everyone is trying their very best in incredibly challenging circumstances. I have staff trying to organise and respond to their class, as well as having their own children learning at home, and partner working from home. The same as many of you are. The pressure is there for everyone.

2) You are, and always have been, your child's primary educator. If you decide that your child isn't going to engage with anything sent home, children also learn from playing outside, or baking, or watching educational TV, or playing lego, or playing a board game; it is your choice. That is your right. There is nothing to stress or feel guilty about.

3) Schools are reacting to everything as best we can. We have 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! We are adapting quickly to keep your children as engaged as possible, posting videos, and work for them to do.

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, a few FAQs:

My school has sent home lots of physical work. Pages and pages, hours and hours. How am I supposed to get through it all?!

You're not, don't try. Your child's teacher spent time pulling together a pack as some families find it easier to give their child a booklet to work through. There are also activities and videos posted on Class DoJo. Some families find it easier to access activities through Class DoJo. It's not a competition, or a race. These are all ideas to try and help and support you at home. CBBC are also now starting programmes between 9am and 12pm, this may work for you. You are a variety of different things that you can let your child do. Great if they can get some work done that has been set by their teacher and sent in, we love seeing what they have been up to.

My school keeps sending home links and posting work on Class DoJo. How do I make it stop? Ahhhhhh!

See above. These are suggestions and ideas because the we are trying our best to support in whatever way we can. Use them if they suit you, don't if they don't suit. If you're getting stressed, stop. No one will know!

Someone in my child's class has everything done and we've barely started. Will they fall behind?

Even if everything were equal in terms of support, time and number of children (which it's not) all children learn at different rates. In the class there's a wide range of levels in all subjects, there's different paces and there are many

children working on differentiated levels of work. It's almost impossible for teachers to differentiate at the moment, so you don't have to do it either.

They will cover all of the work again and again over the years. Division is not just taught once, for example. It is revisited every term, in slightly different ways, each time adding to where the children had understood to the previous time.

Why won't you just zoom all your lessons?

I've been asked this numerous times! The way a lesson is structured at school, we do an input to children, then they start working, staff then go round and support the children, give extra resources if necessary, for them to get on with the work. We will set up about 4 slightly different tasks, which are given to different groups of children. We will then discuss in a small group, or with the class, how they have been getting on, and what they have learnt. To have 30 children on line at the same time, understanding when to talk, when not to, teachers to give individuals extra support when they see they need it, give different tasks to different children just doesn't work; and didn't when we tried it with 2 classes. I realise that there are a few schools that have said they are doing it, I am also aware of schools that started doing it and have quickly stopped as the time spent has not been constructive, and it became more stressful for parents and children.

My aim is for teachers and TAs to give input to the start of lessons, which children can then continue at home, when it is convenient for the family at home. It can then be returned when you are ready to return it. There's a variety of tasks and activities for you to choose from, as well as the work booklets in the Junior School foyer.

I'm not doing any work with my children. All they're doing is building Lego, cooking and playing outside.

All of this is learning - very valuable learning. Give yourself and them a break and enjoy your time with them.

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

You can't, stop trying. If they're old enough, try to get them to do little bits independently. Otherwise try to do something they can all engage with, reading a story together, some free writing, baking etc.

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

For me, survive. Look after each other. Get fresh air each day. Keep basic routines going.

My ideal for the children in our school?

- Staff are uploading activities every day onto Class DoJo, look at them with your children, so they still feel connected with school. Let them see what others are doing, and see what interests them that they'd like to do. I've seen Maths and English activities, challenges, stories, topic work on there.
- Pick up a booklet from the Junior school, and see if there is an activity in there that interests them
- A bit of reading every day (independent or to them or via audiobook etc)
- Some free writing now and then. If they'll keep a diary or something, great. If not, would they draw a comic?
- Practical hands on maths. Be that cooking, cleaning, outside or some maths games, physical or digital.
- Some fine motor work. Lego, cutting, playdough, tidying up small toys.
- Physical exercise everyday
- Some art/music where possible through the week. Doesn't need to be guided.
- Stretch goal, if old enough getting them to independently work on a project is great for keeping brains ticking over. Get them researching in a book or online and putting together something to present to you or family.
- If younger, lots of imaginative free play, the more independent the better.

You are doing enough. You are loving your children and supporting them through a difficult time. Look after yourself. Minimising stress is absolutely vital in a time like this for mental health, and for the well-being of the people you love around you. Don't let this be something that stresses you. Only you can control this by accepting it is in your circle of control. You are the primary educator and this is your call.

We are here to help and support you. Please keep communicating with us, and we will get through this together.

With Best Wishes

Mr R Burbage
Headteacher

