



Woodborough Church of England Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Brewis

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Dear Parents and Carers

Adjusting to Remote Learning – at Home and in School

As I write to you, we are now a week on from the Prime Minister's announcement that a third national lockdown would commence with almost immediate effect and that schools, pupils and families would switch overnight to remote learning.

The past few days have heralded a multitude of emotions for us all, as once again we've engaged with new systems, worked out how we might juggle work and home, whilst of course paying heed to the seriousness of the situation in which we all find ourselves, and managing the frustration of not knowing how long we will all need to continue working in this way. As we reach mid-January, in many ways 2021 has felt like quite a long year already!

In writing to you to give an update on the progress of remote learning so far, and to share and address the feedback we have received, I'd like to begin by saying a heartfelt THANK YOU from all of our staff, to all of our parents and carers once again, for their amazing support over a very busy and challenging week. We know we've not yet got remote learning 'right' for everyone, but please be assured that we are trying our very best and are extremely grateful for your engagement, patience and huge at-home efforts, as we collaborate and endeavour to find a workable solution for everyone.

It is important to begin by acknowledging that remote education in this lockdown, is by necessity, quite different to that which we established during the first lockdown.

In March 2020 our school community embarked upon a programme of home learning that we very much 'grew' ourselves. Fortunately, we had already introduced the use of Seesaw and Tapestry learning platforms in some classes and were able to quickly roll out their use school-wide. Those resources, together with strong and experienced staff - with a shared determination to support both pupils' learning and well-being, and the wholehearted backing of our amazing network of families, combined to make a very successful formula! As time went on, we were able to make use of online learning resources that were quickly being developed, e.g. Joe Wicks began to support PE at home, authors shared their stories and the Oak Academy was launched.

We embark upon remote learning in the third lockdown, still proud of our collective efforts and achievements in spring and summer 2020, but this time with the benefit of hindsight and also with insights from continuing professional development. We are confident that remote learning for our pupils and the support of our families far surpassed the experiences of others in many establishments elsewhere. However, there were lessons to be learned and improvements we believe we can, and are required to make this time, to improve the remote learning offer for our pupils – aligning it more to the classroom curriculum and enabling learning progress to be made.



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The effects of the first national lockdown on children's learning have been widely reported since the beginning of this academic year. We were very pleased that the vast majority of our pupils returned to school, albeit on a part-time basis, for the final few weeks of the Summer Term 2020. Not only did this give the children much-needed time together, but it also gave us the opportunity to assess any gaps in learning and understanding and make provision to address them as soon as the new academic year began in September.

The most notable effects that we observed in our pupils, and have been working hard this year to address, included:

- a decline in writing stamina, handwriting and presentation of written work;
- a decline in the fluency and recall of number facts and application of mathematical knowledge and reasoning skills;
- and, a decline in overall stamina for work and concentration on tasks.

As we now find ourselves in another period of lockdown and remote learning, our methods and timetables are geared to continue to focus on these areas for improvement and to endeavour to guard against there being similar gaps when children return to school. This time, you will also be aware that there is direction from the Government with regard to the hours of directed learning we should be setting:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-outlines-plans-to-support-young-people>.

Efforts have been made to replicate the in-school timetables that the children are used to following and this week, all of our class teachers have added short, pre-recorded videos to introduce lessons and share teaching expectations. Whilst we appreciate that learning at home is a different experience for our children, the methods being used are aimed to provide both familiarity and to enable them to work as independently as possible (with bonus of a video being that children can pause their teachers (!) and play again as necessary). Core subjects (English – phonics, reading and writing and maths) have been timetabled for each morning because we know that children's attention and learning is more focussed then. Time allocations have been shared so that there is a guide to how long we would expect children to spend on tasks in school. This is to ensure that pupils are not spending excessive amounts of time on preferred subjects at the expense of other subjects and also to try to guard against less favourite subjects being rushed. If a subject has been allocated an hour, the class teacher would expect an hour's worth of work to be submitted – and children are likely to be very aware of how much they would ordinarily achieve and what their teachers expectations would be. Submitting work in accordance with the daily timetable also assists the class teachers with their assessment of the children's learning and enables them to provide the most timely and constructive feedback.

On Monday, the Government published guidance entitled 'What's working well in remote education' which you can read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education/whats-working-well-in-remote-education>. We are endeavouring to provide much of what is detailed in ways that are best suited to the needs of our children and families.

HOWEVER! We know with absolute certainty that everyone's circumstances are different. We are all united in wanting this challenging situation to be resolved as soon as possible, for children to return safely to learning in school and we know that everyone is juggling something. Feedback from some families favours the structure of remote learning during this lockdown and other families are finding it less successful. We also know that we'll never be able to please everyone and that conditions change.

To that end, we would like to reassure you that we do understand and are grateful for your candid feedback. Class teachers are easily contactable via learning platforms and class emails and are working hard to accommodate individual family needs as best they can. Our timetables are 'suggested' and the order in which the subjects are set to be completed are 'ideals' and of course, they need to be ordered and fitted around other commitments, availability of technology, the need for a break from screen time, the need for some physical exercise, fresh air and a cup of tea, family life and well-being, and life in general during a national/global pandemic!

We do 'get it' and please know we feel the same. We don't apologise for having high expectations – because that is why you chose our school and it is what you expect of us. This time – as last, we will endure by all doing the very best we can, supporting one another and staying in touch. Thank you all for everything you are doing – once again, we will get through this together!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Brewis', written in a cursive style.

Mrs Sarah Brewis

Headteacher