

29 January 2021

Dear Parents,

Thank you for everything you are doing at home to support your child with their learning. We are living through the most extraordinary times and I recognise how challenging it is for so many: financially, emotionally and as parents. If we can support you and your children in any way, please reach out. The staff have been incredible, delivering learning in school and also at home and I am hugely grateful to each one of them. However, I am very aware that you, as parents, have once again had a role landed upon you that presents huge challenges for your typical home life. Please be patient with yourself, please only do what you possibly can.

Our pupils have shown amazing effort and positivity over the past four weeks. Thank you for your encouragement as they engage with learning from home. I know they will continue to thrive in the weeks ahead. As many of you know I am a dad-of-two as well as been a Head Teacher, as a result of this I empathise with the challenges you are facing. I share many of your worries and concerns for my own family. My girls are 11 and 14. I struggle with their work at times and I have no idea how to speak German to a GCSE level, but this is something which is taking place in my own home! Please see under a few tips which may be helpful to support your home learning ...

Talk to your children

- *Ask them how they're doing and get them to tell you five things they've learnt that day. Reward them – even if it's just a 'Well done'. Praise goes a long way.*

Ask the school

- *Make sure you – or your child – know they can get in touch with school with any problems at all. They shouldn't feel they're stuck at home by themselves.*

Create a safe space just for them

- *Not everyone has a clear dining-room table where they can set their work up, but please try to find them a nice quiet place to learn.*

Set your expectations

- *Don't try to do everything at once or complete all the tasks that the school is setting, if it is causing undue stress. Nobody is going to tell you you're doing a terrible job. Teachers hugely appreciate the support from parents and we're here to help you. Please reach out - if you need us.*

Take a screen break

- *Encourage daily exercise and time away from the screen. Getting out for a walk is very important. So is reading a physical book!*

Get showered and ready for the day

- *A daily routine is good. I would advise parents to make sure their kids get up, get showered and dressed, not spend the day in their pyjamas. So that way when you sit down to work or log into a live lesson, it's like you're approaching a proper school day. I think putting school uniforms on might be a step too far, though.*

The new world we are in

The children should now be in a habit of participating in their regular and planned Google Meets. Over the last few weeks, overwhelmingly our children have been fantastic. Our expectations regarding pupil online behaviour are as high as they usually are. In a nutshell your children are expected to be polite, engaged in their learning and respectful of their friends and staff. Pupils will be given clear guidance regarding expectations of their behaviour and the behaviour of staff during online lessons. Where a pupil disregards these expectations, the member of staff leading the session will warn the pupil(s) regarding expectations and, if this does not resolve the issue, will then either mute the child (using the online feature) or remove the pupil from the session and the online classroom. In the event of this, parents will be contacted and informed of the reasons for the removal of the pupil from the session. Where necessary, the issue should be recorded via school behaviour systems and reported to senior staff. Senior staff will confirm the appropriate sanction if required. To be honest, the issue of pupil inappropriate behaviour has rarely happened but I wanted to be clear in our expectations.

If a parent needs to speak with a member of staff this should not take place during an online session in the class Google meet. As you would usually do, please contact the office to arrange an appointment and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Your child's mental health and wellbeing

It is important for your child to take breaks away from their work at home, just as they would in school. They should also try to spend some time in the day outdoors doing a form of exercise they enjoy. Previous to the current situation we as a nation were starting to get concerned with the amount of time some of our young people were spending in the online world. The global pandemic has necessitated our children spending even more time online. This is why it is crucial that we insist our children spend time away from work and their screens even more.

IT Devices

In the past two weeks, we have loaned out one hundred devices. If you require a device, please get in touch with the school office and we will arrange one for you to collect.

Miss Doughty

This week Miss Doughty has been asked to provide leadership support to Catholic school in Sunderland for two days a week. She will start going to visit the school over the coming weeks and start the role each Thursday and Friday after half term. She'll be amazing but she'll be missed in the Y6 team on those days. This will mean that the groups of children who are currently on a Google meet with Miss Doughty will have a different teacher from next week (Miss Reddington and Mr Haley). The year group will outline the slightly changed groupings on their weekly overview which is saved on the year group Google Classroom.

February half-term

We have been informed by the government that schools will close as usual over February half-term and are not expected to remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers during that week.

School reopening

On Wednesday, the government announced a provisional date for the reopening of schools in England, 8th March. A lot of conversations need to take place between many people at a national and local level before this date becomes a reality. We will start making our plans in time when we know more and we will involve you in our thoughts closer to the date.

Please notify us if you require any support or are worried about your child, their mental health and wellbeing, or their learning. As parents, please try to take time for yourselves too. Thank you for your continued support.

Nick Conway

See under, some words I use from time to time by St Francis de Sales, from around 1600AD.

***“When you encounter difficulties and contradictions,
try not to break them.***

***Trees that survive the storm are the ones that can adapt by
bending rather than breaking with the pressure.***

Never be in a hurry; try to do things in a calm spirit.

***Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever,
even if your whole world seems upset.***

Be patient with everyone, but above all with yourself...

***do not be disheartened by your struggles,
always rise up again and again with fresh courage.***

We shall steer safely through every storm,

so long as our heart is right,

our intention generous,

and our courage steadfast.”