



2nd February 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Home Learning Update

We are now into week five of home learning for the majority of our children, and with at least another four weeks to follow, it is an appropriate time for us to reflect on how these first four weeks have gone, celebrate the successes (there have definitely been many!) and look at how we can make any adjustments to improve further.

Parental Survey

Thank you for the time taken to complete the recent parent survey. We had 78 completed responses, and although we have had informal feedback throughout the last 4 weeks, to see the responses given in this survey was very reassuring.

The survey results were as follows:

		% of Parents (rounded to nearest whole %)					RAG
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	
1	Communication from the school has been helpful, regular and responsive, and helped to support and motivate my child.	78%	22%	3%			Green
2	Feedback provided to my child has been beneficial to their learning, progression and wellbeing.	55%	33%	3%	1%	9%	Green
3	My child responds well to the regular online live interaction with their teacher and friends.	53%	33%	13%	1%	1%	Yellow
4	Provision for remote learning has improved in quality since the Spring lockdown.	70%	18%	1%		10%	Green
5	Live tutorials on Microsoft Teams add structure and purpose to my child's learning.	73%	24%	3%			Green
6	Work set for my child is similar to that which would be set in school.	41%	38%			21%	Green
7	The work provided covers a range of curriculum subjects beyond maths and English.	59%	40%	1%		1%	Green

"We have faith in God, ourselves and everyone around us"



8	My child is encouraged to work hard, be as independent as possible and do their best by the staff in school.	65%	32%			3%	
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	
9	Castor CE Primary have been supportive of the individual needs of my child during these periods of remote learning.	60%	29%	8%		4%	
10	Castor CE Primary have allowed me some flexibility with my child's learning.	50%	46%	1%		3%	
11	Any queries I have raised throughout this time have been addressed well.	63%	28%	1%		8%	
12	A daily act of Collective Worship enables my child to continue to feel part of our church school community.	43%	30%	3%		25%	

We were absolutely overwhelmed by the lovely comments that were left with these surveys. We have shared them all with the staff members they related to. Although it wasn't the intention behind doing this survey, we had just wanted to get a clear picture of parental perception of our remote learning, to receive such kind and thoughtful comments has proven to be a real boost for the staff. We had felt that things were going well, but weren't quite expecting the flood of positivity and appreciation that came our way! We have worked hard to improve the remote offer since the Spring lockdown, and I'm delighted to hear from you that we have been successful in doing this.

We are not a school to 'rest on our laurels', and as well as everything is going at present, we will take the data from the survey, as well as the helpful suggestions from the comments, to refine our procedures for the following weeks.

As lockdown continues...

We know that, at present, this current school closure will continue until at least 8th March. We also know that schools will be given at least two week's notice before they will be open again. Based on this survey, and the knowledge that we have of the immediate future, it's important that we try and get the best out of this time that we can, given the circumstances.

ICT Access – At the start of this lockdown period we reached out to families to establish how you were accessing our remote learning. From this, we were able to prioritise what devices we had available, including those from the DfE, and ensure that those in most urgent need of devices were able to have them. We are now at the stage where every family has internet access, and everybody has access through a device of some kind. However, in some cases, these are still shared devices, and in some cases they are mobile phones, very small tablets or are shared devices with your workplace. This does not need to be the case and there is no need for any family to struggle on. Friends, the Parish Councils of Castor, Ailsworth, Marholm and Sutton, as well as CASPRA and the local employer BGL Group have very kindly made generous donations to us that have been used to buy 15 additional full size iPads, which will be with us shortly. At the end of this week we are also taking delivery of 12 recycled Chromebooks. If you feel your child would benefit from one of these, then please send an email to Mrs Baxter-Edwards (secretary@castor.peterborough.sch.uk). Our last survey of information about access is now out of date as devices have been allocated and, as time has passed, some of you have managed to source tablets and laptops from elsewhere. Demonstrating great humility, many of you have previously said to us 'there will be people who need it more than us'. Whilst this is a lovely way to act, please don't feel the need to be short yourself – there will be plenty to go round.

Expectations – Our online tutorials and class email accounts allow us to meet the DfE expectation of having ‘systems for checking, daily, whether pupils are engaging with their work, and work with families to rapidly identify effective solutions where engagement is a concern’. We will continue to follow up instances whereby children are not engaging with their work on a daily basis, and look to work with you to resolve any issues and engage the children with their learning. Please continue to maintain daily contact with us, by email or through Microsoft teams - it is not deemed acceptable by the DfE to just not engage with home learning. We want to support in any way that we can.

The amount of work we set and ask the children to complete is stipulated to us by the DfE, who have said that children in Key Stage 1 should be completing on average 3 hours a day, with children in Key Stage 2 completing on average 4 hours a day. Based on this, a reasonable expectation for children in Reception would be to be completing slightly less hours than children in Key Stage 1. However, please remember that although this is what we set, we are also realistic and know that the children are going to have some days that are better than others – often for no apparent reason. Some days your home schooling will be a huge success and you will be thinking of taking up teacher training yourself, other days it will be a challenge and you’ll want school to open tomorrow! Many of us are parents also and have exactly the same home schooling experiences – and we’re the teachers! Accept that this will happen, start each day as a new day and prioritise those parts of the learning that you think will be most beneficial for your child, and also achievable. A useful tip at the start of each day is to create a list of the tasks / tutorials on a timetable for your child and allow them to tick them off as they complete them. Allow them to have input as to where they put their breaks / playtimes in etc.

Screen time - We will be making a conscious effort to be aware of the amount of time that children are currently spending looking at screens. The novelty of lockdown for the children has well and truly worn off, and with the poor weather and dark nights, it has become very apparent that this lockdown is very different to the last, and the children are not able to get out in the fresh air after school hours. We will therefore be setting some tasks that do not require the children to necessarily be looking at an electronic screen, and can be completed either just on paper or with a practical activity. We know that the art sessions have been particularly well received, and we will be aiming to do more of this type of learning, particularly in the afternoons when we know the children are finding it harder. Please remember that your child’s ‘working from home’ is flexible, and we don’t set any kind of deadline for completing or submitting work – if you have some time in the day when the sun is out and you can go for a walk, then please take the opportunity to do so. You will all benefit from doing this.

Live learning - Please also remember that the live tutorials are only one aspect of our remote learning offer, it is not compulsory to attend all of them. They were only ever intended as tutorials to supplement the school work that had been sent home. Clearly, the children will benefit from attending them, but if you feel confident in approaching a particular task with your child and wish to take a break away from the screen and just complete and submit the work, then that is of course perfectly acceptable. OFSTED’s guidance on [‘What’s working well in remote education’](#) is an interesting read, and explains the importance of having a balanced, well-rounded approach to home learning. I think our approach of live tutorials combined with completing work ‘off line’ fits in with this well..

Children’s Mental Health Week - This week is ‘Children’s Mental Health Week 2021’, with the theme of ‘Express yourself’. Whilst a child finding aspects of home learning does not necessarily have a mental health issue, it is good for both them and us to be aware of it and talk about when we are not feeling great. Encourage your child to tell you when they are finding it hard to concentrate, or if they are finding it hard to be happy or relaxed. There are lots of resources on the website that you can use (<https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/>), and we hope that by adjusting our learning slightly

and reaffirming what is and isn't expected, then this will help. A mental health week (or day) is a good start, but to truly have an impact it needs to be drip fed into everything over a longer period of time, and this is how we intend to approach it.

And finally...

You have all been incredible, and no matter how tough the hard days feel, you have done the best by your children. We are hopefully almost halfway through this national lockdown now. We have to be in a better place than we were a month ago. The vaccines are flowing, the nights are getting lighter and hopefully the weather a little warmer. The light at the end of that tunnel will start to show just that little bit stronger if we all just keep doing what we are doing. Keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Brompton'.

Mr N Brompton
Headteacher