Friday 3rd April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Re: Hello & Next steps**

These are extreme and worrying times – what can be said by way of comfort other than we’re all in this together. We can but hope that our children draw most from this sense of connectedness; from the strength of their family and community; from the fine examples of resilience and compassion all around us as we all navigate our way through this and out the other side. I hope you are coping well enough with the children at home with so much else besides to juggle and that your lives have fallen into some kind of rhythm.

I wanted to write to give you a ‘heads up’ concerning phase 2 of our home learning advice and support which will be fully ready for you on the last Friday of the Easter ‘holiday.’ I write to you now rather than then, conscious that in many ways Easter will present a similar challenge for many of us to term time; that to stay sane and make the return to ‘term’ manageable, we will need to maintain routines and hoping that a few words of reassurance here and some information about what support is on the way, might help you through the next couple of weeks.

Over the last week and a half, we have listened to feedback from families about home learning and kept an eye on the best practice emerging around us. In coming up with Phase 2, we have considered the following priorities: -

1.   Families need to have enough learning to focus on and enough resources to support them but not so much that we make an already difficult situation more stressful than it needs to be.

2.   As time goes on, the greatest concern will be to support pupils to make appropriate progress in English and maths.

3.   Wherever possible we should look to tap into some natural advantages for delivering meaningful and purposeful learning- inherent in the home environment.

4.   We now need to engineer manageable opportunities for pupils/parents and teachers to interact on an ongoing basis.

In my opinion (and it is just an opinion), we need to do our level best to flip this situation on its head and get the most out of it. Please know that, in stating this, I do not underestimate the massive challenges facing us. Some of you will have read Mathew Syed’s article this week-<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52094332-> where he states, *‘The coronavirus has turned our lives upside down and, although we hope to return to some version of normality in the coming months, it is probable that nothing will quite be the same again. Many have lost their livelihoods and businesses, and there is no diminishing the difficulties - emotional and financial - this has brought in its wake. But amid the darkness, there are also opportunities.’*

In the context of home learning, can I ask you to try to heed Mathew Syed’s advice and when perhaps things are getting stressful or boring or frustrating for you or the children, do your best to flip the thing around. While there are clearly things your children need to learn, please do not feel duty bound to the long lists of possible learning we provide - feel free to use your judgement (as the adult) and prioritise some of the learning over others. In terms of ‘flipping,’ always bring it back to the learning as opposed to the task or activity: recognise there are very many ways to crack a nut and some kind of written record (whilst, admittedly, it keeps said child in one place) is no guarantee of good learning. Don’t hesitate to give your children some choice/ some agency in deciding when and how they want to learn something- as we know, allowing your children some self-determination can be motivating. Ultimately we also know the best learning will come out of this situation (or any situation for that matter) when children and adults can enjoy it and enjoy it together. While there are clearly natural limitations to how much and often we can achieve this, it should remain our overarching aim.

There will need to be routine and yes, maths and English are priorities because they enable access to most everything else, but it is also so important that we play to our strengths:-

1. There are plenty of opportunities (as I mentioned above) for learning at home which we can’t always recreate as easily in school: teach your children to cook, bake, do DIY, garden, play music, make music, act, dance - grab this opportunity!
2. We all have our own strengths, interests, hobbies-- of course you will already be in the habit of sharing these with your children – but please don’t hesitate to trade some of the school work in for your passions.
3. Your children will have their own strengths- play to their strengths when deciding how to deliver the learning.

As I said the full phase 2 learning ‘pack’ will come out on Friday 17th April. The pack will contain a number of ongoing learning suggestions including notably a ‘reading to your child’ time each day as well as ideas for family debates and possibly even a live yoga session for families to join in on. The English and the maths will be provided in 2 week units and much of the rest of the learning will be for across all of Term 5. Critically we are looking to increase interaction between home and school by telephone, email, ‘Padlet’ and possibly ‘Zoom.’ Teachers will start ringing you over the next couple of weeks and the other forms of communication will follow on soon after. All the information regarding home learning will be constantly updated on the ‘Corona Virus Home Learning’ tab on the website. If you have any concerns and you need some support, get in touch. We are working closely with the ‘Minchinhampton Corona Virus Response Group,’ who are doing an amazing job getting support to where it is most needed. We are also willing to help in school in any way we can.

Good luck everyone

Kind regards

Mr Moss