



## COVID -19 – school update 24.3.2020

Yesterday at St Bede's we managed to provide childcare to 17 children whose parents had no choice but to go to work. It was a privilege to do this and we will continue to for as long as we can. Some staff are in school on a rota basis and if not essential they are working from home. Some staff have to stay at home to safeguard them and their families and this has caused them some distress as they wish to 'do their bit'. I am so proud and feel privileged to be working with such a caring community of parents, governors and staff.

In light of the Prime Ministers brief to the country last night I wanted to reinforce some messages.

People will only be allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:

- Shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- One form of exercise a day - for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of their household;
- Any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
- Travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

The final category is where school fits. For some of you it is essential that you are at work, your work cannot be carried out at home. We therefore need to provide you with child care so you can do this.

I do ask though that you reflect upon your needs. If your child can be cared for at home then please keep them there, if only one carer has to go into work then please keep the children at home. Our homes carry the least risk or transferring the virus in order to keep ourselves and others safe. Please contact the school office either via telephone or email to organise what essential childcare you will need over the coming weeks.

We will continue to offer this service as long as we can safely do so, keeping St Bede's staff fit and healthy is essential in this process – if we get ill we will be unable to look after the children.

### **For those of you at home I have some messages**

We are reading and hearing that some of you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed and under pressure by everything that's happening. This includes the work being sent home for your child. I wanted to just give my perspective on it all and I hope this can help with some stresses.

A few points to note first:

1) This is not homeschooling. This is an unprecedented emergency situation impacting on the whole world. Let's keep perspective. Homeschooling is a choice, where you plan for it and you are your child's school teacher in whatever form you choose. What you are doing at home is distance learning you are trying your best to get it right - there is no right or wrong.

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 and is going to spend the entire period playing in the dirt, or baking, or watching TV, then that is your choice and its fine.

3) Schools have had to quickly adapt too, over the last week there has been a lot of not knowing what we are doing. We had 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.

4) It is absolutely not possible to facilitate distance learning with a primary aged child **and** work from home at the same time. I know I did once try to work at home planning lessons and have two little children around me in a proper and focused way to ensure their learning was continuing – haaa haa the very idea is nonsense – I failed dismally. 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, there are times that they can be independently busy – they also learn then.

### Some questions that have been asked....

- 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 a couple of hours in utter panic gathering things to send home so they could say they did their best and there wasn't a lot of complaints that enough didn't go home. It's not a competition, or a race. It is there for support.

- School keeps sending home links and emails with more work. How do I make it stop?

See above. These are suggestions and ideas because the school is worried they're not offering enough. Use them if they suit you, don't if they don't suit. If you're getting stressed, stop opening the emails. No one will know! When you feel less stressed about it use the class teacher's email address to speak with them.

- 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. Also remember the whole country is in the same position.

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

This is fantastic learning – think about Nursery and Reception. Monopolise on these opportunities play with them, talk to them, problem solve – oh there is so much you can get from this. Give yourself and them a break.

- 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?

I don't have one except be with your children, talk with them, play with them, teach them resilience and perseverance. Teach them the positives and negatives of the Internet ensuring that they are safe. Help them overcome worries thus preventing anxieties building. Teach them to care for others but above all be a brilliant role model to your children, you are their most important person. They will become your friend as they grow up but at the moment you are their parent/carer and so you show them how to be brilliant.

### My ideal for the children at St Bede's

- A bit of reading every day - they read, you read to them, you both listen to an audiobook, immerse your child in books. This is one of the best things you can do for them. If you have the opportunity read up on the research around reading do it. It is fascinating.
- Some free writing now and then. If they'll keep a diary or something, great. If not, would they draw a comic? If they keep a diary of this time imagine in many years to come how people could reference it. They could become the modern Samuel Pepys
- Practical hands on maths. Be that via 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. Share it in your window for everyone to see when they do their daily walk alone watch for the smiles.
- -A project, 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.
- Spend some time with God. At this moment in time there will be many questions that cannot be answered. Why is this happening? How can God allow this?  
Please help your child to explore these questions. Guide them to look for the positives when we are surrounded with so many challenges and so much sadness. Spend time with them praying. The children of St Bede's always amaze me when they are spiritual, they have a very deep understanding of the importance of life. Help them to continue to nurture this, help them to have hope for the future, to plan how they can help society moving forward. My biggest hope is that this whole experience will change people for the better. We will again as a society care for each other greatly and remove the selfish materialism that has grown.

You are doing enough. You are loving your children and supporting them through a difficult time. Look after yourself too, minimising stress is absolutely vital in a time like this for mental health. Don't let this be something that stresses you. Only you can control that by accepting what is in your circle of control and what is not.

We have provided activities to help you, so that you can use them if you want to. Please do not feel they have to be done, if you think of better ways to teach your children essential skills then do it but also enjoy the time you have with them –push the boat out turn off the technology and go old school!

Please keep in touch with school as we will with you.

Take care and God bless to you all,

Therese Worrall- Headteacher of the most wonderful school in the world.