



G A Y T O N P R I M A R Y S C H O O L
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Friday 1st May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

During these incredibly difficult times, I hope everyone is well and staying safe. I wanted to write to update you with regards to our plans for home learning. As you will be aware, schools had no time to prepare for the school closures and had to very quickly put things in place to try and provide some support and guidance for parents. There was a clear message given to schools, at the time of closure, that we should be consolidating learning and not introducing new content. We have had lots of positive feedback from parents regarding what has been put in place for home learning and know that lots of our children have been engaging with the activities that have been set by school staff.

We have tried to get a balance between providing activities for the children but equally ensuring that we are not overwhelming children or parents at what is an incredibly mentally challenging time for everyone. Whilst I wholly believe in the importance of education for all children, it is important to remember that we are living in completely unprecedented times and that it is vital to recognise that parents can't replicate the learning that takes place within a primary classroom in a home environment. There is no doubt that whenever schools return, we will have to fill gaps and make up for the time lost, but nationally everyone will be doing this. Right now, I still strongly believe that the most important thing for your child is that they feel safe, secure and emotionally supported.

However, as we are now coming to the end of week 4 (not including the 2 week Easter break) we recognise as a school that we may now need to begin to provide more structure to our home learning. It is evident that no one knows when schools in the UK will return but when they do, it most certainly will be only a partial re-opening and a definite phased return. No one knows the details of this yet, and what this may look like in practice. Therefore, with this in mind, we feel that it is necessary for us to start introducing some of the summer term curriculum to our pupils and allow them to experience some of the learning and topics that they would have had, had they still have been in school. Therefore, today I will be emailing all parents with an overview of the home learning for next week (week commencing 4th May 2020).

Some parents have contacted me this week, expressing their concerns regarding our home learning and requesting that we undertake online lessons for pupils. Following all safeguarding and union guidelines, this will not be happening and it is not occurring in other local Wirral schools. The Government themselves recognise this and as a result they have significantly invested in the creation of the Oak National Academy and also the addition of BBC Bitesize and have actively encouraged schools to make use of these resources. From this week, if staff feel there is something particularly pertinent for children to access on these sites, they will be making this clear in the new home learning overviews but I will not be asking my staff to deliver online lessons.

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I think it is really important to recognise that, despite the message that schools are closed, we are still open and staff are still working in school including during holidays. They are coming into work providing childcare for the families of our critical workers and doing an excellent job trying to keep school life as normal as possible for these children. I know how much this is appreciated by all our critical workers. The organisation of this childcare facility has created significant additional work for all teaching staff; my staff have risen to this challenge ensuring that they have completed additional training in necessary aspects including health and safety, risk assessment and first aid, among many other things. All of these have been necessary to ensure we are compliant with Government guidelines.

With regards to home learning (longer term), we are hoping to move over to the use of Google Classrooms and once this is complete, we will start to share aspects of this with the children. We are hoping that this will continue to aid the learning opportunities for your child and will support us further when we are looking at a phased return to school for some pupils.

I just want to reiterate what I have said before; parents are being asked to do something that is incredibly challenging and difficult- we completely appreciate this. Everyone in our school community needs to focus on the most important thing right now, which is keeping your child/ren safe and getting through this as a family. Please do not feel pressured by home learning and do what feels manageable for you and remember right now your child/ren are relying on you to be their constant source of reassurance and support; this can be very challenging and it is important that parents look after their own mental health and well-being as well.

Finally, please remember that your child can contact members of staff via the eSchools platform or via Tapestry for F2 children. They can also upload photographs of their work or documents they have created for staff to see. We love to see what the children are doing at home so please encourage your child to do this. You can also share work via our twitter page @GaytonPrimary. It always brings a smile to my face when I see anything that has been created by any of our children and helps to bring our Gayton community closer together during a very challenging time.

Please stay safe everyone and look after each other.

Kind regards,

Mrs McAleny

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