

21 January 2021



Dear Parents,

Recently, I attempted to provide you with a summary of Ofsted's publication "What's working well in Remote Education." This comprised of seven sections. My intention was to outline our own school's approach, based upon our beliefs of ensuring good practice. Today, I would like to highlight two sections from Ofsted's report (Live lessons aren't always best and Engagement matters, but it is only the start). These are Ofsted's own headings and commentary.

Live lessons aren't always best

Some think that a live lesson is the 'gold standard' of remote education. This isn't necessarily the case. Live lessons have a lot of advantages. They can make curriculum alignment easier, and can keep pupils' attention, not least as the teacher has more control over the learning environment. But live lessons are not always more effective than asynchronous (not happening at the same time) approaches. There are some specific difficulties in doing live lessons. It can be hard to build in interaction and flexibility. This means that giving feedback can actually be less effective than when we use recorded lesson segments followed by interactive chats, or tasks and feedback. Using recorded lessons produced externally can allow you to easily draw on high-quality lessons taught by expert subject teachers. The challenge here can be to make sure they are integrated with the curriculum. Because evidence suggests that concentration online is shorter than the length of a typical lesson, filming a classroom lesson may be ineffective. Different approaches to remote education suit different types of content and pupils. Mixed models may be effective in some cases. For example, you could use the so-called 'flipped learning' model. In this, new content is taught through an asynchronous recorded lesson. Practice, tutoring and feedback are then done synchronously.

Engagement matters, but it is only the start.

It's harder to engage and motivate pupils remotely than when they are in the classroom. There are more distractions, and as a teacher you're not physically present to manage the situation. Communicating and working with parents, without putting an unreasonable burden on them, can help support home learning. A lot of attention has been paid to ways in which online education can be made more engaging. For example, we can make sure different types of tasks and activities are alternated, or build in rewards and incentives to make learning more 'game-like'. While it is important to engage pupils, this is only a precondition for learning, not the thing itself. There is only so much a teacher can do to engage pupils remotely. We therefore need to make sure that efforts to engage don't distract us from teaching the curriculum. We also need to check whether pupils have actually learned the content we want them to through assessment.

Next steps

It is clear that what works well for one family does not necessarily work well for another family. It is clear that what works well one day does not necessarily work well the next day. Our families are comprised of different ages and different needs.



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Our school's approach to remote learning has been to try and establish the foundations for continued learning, including the creation of a digital platform and how to make best use of it. Our plans indicate intended learning and the daily activities on Seesaw provide the resources. However, these are only an intended guide. This is an asynchronous approach and can be tailored to suit individual family situations. The activities do not have to be done on that day. There is the notion of all days rolling into one at the moment, so scheduling a Saturday or Sunday morning, instead of a Monday or Thursday morning, is absolutely fine. Equally, some parents have steered learning in a different way, but still followed the basics of Reading and Maths. Not only is this perfectly acceptable, but it is also part of self-preservation.

I hope that the class "Zoom and Blooms" are enjoyed by the children. I know that all staff have spent a great deal of time getting to grips with the technical and safeguarding requirements of such an activity. This is the next phase of our Remote learning, for which we will look to establish within our repertoire. The intention of these activities are for connection and wellbeing. The learning aspect will most definitely be the development of staff expertise and confidence.

The next step will be for us to ensure that learning intentions are explicit, which you may well see with W.A (We are ...) and R.T (Remember to...). The main purpose of this is for the focus of the learning to be clear for children. When children then make a judgement of their own work, they are guided to just comment about the R.T. criteria. The children know this as self-assessment (SA). When in school, it is also done with a partner as peer assessment (P.A). If children have an older sibling at home, this could be potentially possible.

Teachers are also beginning to explore providing voice commentary on activities to help children understand concepts, if further explanation is required. We are trying to ensure both consistency and cohesion. There is a tremendous amount of new learning for us all. Whilst we trial and investigate, we will continue to provide the high quality response and bespoke feedback that has been evident so far from class teachers.

Kind regards

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Headteacher