



Head Teacher's Update for Parent Council Meeting, 30.01.2020

Being back at school

All really happy to be back but it has been, and continues to be a serious learning curve.

Wanted to share what a school day now looks like. It is more than just the one way system and hand washing, which in itself takes up a significance portion of the day.

The staff is having to learn a whole new way of working - logistics of working with groups, how they hear reading groups, how they give support to the children who need it both for challenge and additional support.

Teachers have been learning to use and introduce:

- A new way of planning learning and teaching without being able to work with different groups
- Ensuring they are in line with the current (ever changing) guidance from the Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council
- Setting up their class page on TEAMS
- Launching Twitter class pages
- Implementing new spelling programme to ensure progression
- Have separate breaks from each other, stopping the opportunity for professional dialogue (and just social chat!)
- Have remote staff meetings through TEAMS at a time where it's crucial to be connected
- Managing the majority of communications about school operations through email with limited contact with each other in person

We have:

- adults distancing 2 metres from the children
- no mixing of class groups
- children from P2 to P7 having to stay in their allocated seats whilst in the classroom
- monitoring children not sharing resources
- managing tracking of work completed whilst not being able to mark work for 72 hours after children hand in their jotters/ worksheets
- organising preparation of resources with restricted access to the photocopier - only one adult allowed at the photocopier at a time
- staggered breaks for children and staff
- limited break out areas for group work - has to be timetabled between two classes and cleaned in between uses
- no access to the ICT suite
- PE which has to be done outside and therefore timetabled
- lunches in the classrooms

I wanted to mention the vulnerabilities of staff - shielding, vulnerable family members, being at higher risk of infection due to working in a school. Staff health and wellbeing is high up on our priorities as well as that of the children.

No-one wants schools to close and aren't questioning the importance of the children being in school but doesn't stop staff being concerned about their own vulnerability.

We are looking forward with the realistic possibility that we will have to have teachers and other staff working from home so there will be other teachers coming into school from the Council's COVID supply list as well as Tania, Lynsey, Anita and myself covering classes.

We want to support a parental understanding about the fact we can't accelerate learning. It is great that children could be supported during school closure and home learning, but teachers are now ensuring that gaps in learning are filled.

Whilst it might appear to some parents that children have taken a step backwards or not being challenged, for staff it is all about making sure the children have depth and breadth of knowledge.

As a staff we are not looking for sympathy but just want to share understanding of the situation in which we are working. We want to go some way to explaining why school and learning is not back to normal.

Homework

New homework model created in response to feedback from parent body. Has been a huge amount of work for the teachers and we are really hopeful that it is seen by the parent body as a support, not an additional stress.

I will be sending out a survey on the 15th of October to gauge reaction from the parent body, the staff and the children.

It is very much a dynamic, responsive model. The model needs to be effective and shown to be having a positive impact for the children and families. We will be monitoring it closely as the weeks pass.

Communication with parents

I am aware that there is a lot of information coming out to the parent body on a variety of channels. To that end I am looking to set up a working group with some parents who have already been in touch to discuss how we can ensure we are being effective communicators.

Will monitor and gather feedback from now till December then plan some evaluative work in the New Year.