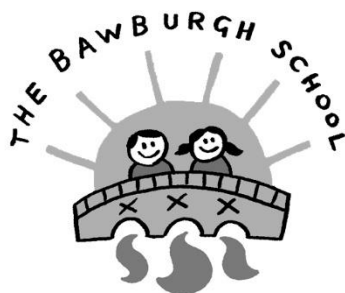


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15th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

As we come to the end of week 2 of the spring term, I wanted to write to you and touch base. I think I speak on behalf of all of our school community, the situation we find ourselves in is extremely difficult, however, we all understand the reasons why; *'stay at home, save lives and protect the NHS'*.

We have all been thrown (again) into working from home or continuing at your place of work, blended learning/home schooling, not being able to see our family and friends. It would be so very easy to look at all the negatives however, it is important to remember that we will come through this and life will return to our normal.

The reality at the moment is our 'normal' in school is extremely hard. All staff are working significantly more hours than previously. School being 'clopen' is a lot more difficult to run and manage than if it were open to full classes. Pressure from the DfE, Norfolk County Council and not to mention the pressure we put on ourselves to ensure your children are not missing out, is taking its toll. Which is why I am saddened to report that some teachers are being bombarded with negative messages on Dojo by a minority of parents. This is having a real effect on wellbeing. Understandably, we are all living in this difficult situation but please know we are giving our all as are the majority of parents.

We are all finding our way with remote blended learning and the practical situation is very different from last summer.

- Up until May half term last year the expectation in school was to provide childcare to the children in school and home learning to those at home. In school we only had on average 8 children a day.
- In June, we were asked to provide education in school to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children only, whilst still providing childcare in school and home learning to the other year groups. With the Year groups and Critical worker bubbles in school we had about 50 children (half the school).
- From October 31st the guidance changed and the DfE made it a legal requirement for schools to provide additional remote learning to any child absent from school due to the Coronavirus, whether this was due to a positive case, close contact isolation, bubble closures or school closure.

In September we sent a survey home to parents asking for feedback and what you would like as a minimum for home learning in the event of another lockdown. With this



information the teachers and I worked hard to devise a remote blended learning offer taking into account your wishes, which was shared with you before October Half term, feedback received from parents was positive.

Following the announcement to close schools on Monday 4th January, to then 'reopen' on the 6th January, guidance was then issued on the 8th January. I would like to share with you what the guidance says regarding remote education:

'The remote education provided should be equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school and will include both recorded or live direct teaching time, and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently. The amount of remote education provided should be, as a minimum:

- *Key Stage 1 (Kingfishers): 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children (Flamingos)*
- *Key Stage 2 (Jackdaws and Hummingbirds): 4 hours a day.'*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf.

Our blended remote learning offer must follow the guidance. Realistically, we know this is a tall order, especially if you have more than one child at home and even fewer devices to support along with your commitments to your workplace. If you are really struggling with the amount of work that is being sent home, talk to your child's teacher and they will help you prioritise the work. If you are struggling with the technology and accessing certain programs or Zoom please do not direct your frustration at the teachers. They will do what they can to help but sometimes the problem might be yours and not theirs. It would be very helpful when children are dialing into a zoom meeting that they have their full name shown so teachers can easily identify them and let them in. For safeguarding reasons, they will not be let in if this is not the case.

Please be aware that there is no expectation for teachers to respond to messages or to be available after 4.30pm on a school day or over the weekend. If they choose to that's fine, but do not expect a reply in the evening or weekend.

The number of children across the school (average 25 per day) that we have in the Critical Worker bubbles has trebled from the summer term last year. The expectation is to teach these children not to provide childcare. Therefore, school and home learning has truly become blended, with the workload doubled.

Bearing in mind the above, I have now asked all teachers to take their statutory planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) over the week. All teachers are entitled to 10% of their working week in order to prepare for the following week, this could mean that your child's teacher is out of communication with you for an afternoon a week. Teachers will let you know when they are planning their PPA and where possible, we have arranged for another member of staff to 'keep an eye' on dojo/tapestry should anything urgent arise.



We don't often compare ourselves to other schools but as a smaller school juggling 'in-school and home education' is difficult. We do not have the large staff teams that some schools have, which enable them to have support staff in school and a team of teachers at home leading the remote learning for each year group. Our reality is all of our support staff and teachers have to do both.

If you are struggling, we are here to help, however, we do have to follow what the DfE has told us to do. One way you could help us is, if you are a critical worker, working part time and have booked full time provision in school for your child, please reconsider and only send your child in when you are at work.

Our top priority remains the welfare and education of your children, this is our job and we love it, even in extremely difficult circumstances. Please continue to work with us.

Have a lovely weekend.

Best wishes



Carla Stedman
Headteacher
The Bawburgh School

