

# LEYBOURNE SS PETER & PAUL C E PRIMARY ACADEMY



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Dear Parents

I do hope that you have had a good week and this week's remote learning has gone well for you and your children. I do appreciate the challenges that many of you are facing with regard to the remote learning, particularly if you are trying to manage the needs of more than one child and / or attempting to juggle working from home at the same time. I know it is far from easy.

I think it is fair to say that some parents are now finding the increased expectations around home learning this time to be quite a challenge. I am sorry about this. Some parents have expressed (entirely understandable) concern about the amount of work their children are expected to be doing and the difficulty this can cause a family. Unfortunately, the Government requires us to provide a meaningful, ambitious programme of remote learning, and to set work of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. The difficulty is, however, that when we are in school, trained teachers are able to deliver the curriculum in a way that engages and supports all learners and enables them to make progress. As I said during the previous lockdown, many of you are not trained teachers and have been given the unenviable task of overseeing your children's learning, on top of your many other roles. This is far from easy and we do all sympathise with the situation in which you have been placed.

I am sorry if you are finding the quantity of remote learning difficult to manage. We have been directed to offer a minimum of 3 hours daily learning activity for pupils in Key Stage 1 and 4 hours for pupils in Key Stage 2. Schools must comply with this expectation - and can be held to account if we do not. I am sure you will have heard Gavin Williamson suggest that parents contact OFSTED if their children's schools do not offer a sufficiently rigorous remote education provision. Personally, I would always encourage any parent who has a concern about the provision schools are offering to contact the school directly in the first instance, rather than an outside agency. This situation is a new one for parents and teachers alike, and I hope that we can continue to support each other and work together, rather than be pitted against each other, as a result of what is actually a Government policy.

Our provision is as follows:

*30 minute* daily live lesson

*30 minutes* independent reading

*15 -30 minutes daily* TTRockstars (Year 2 upwards), handwriting practice or spellings

*15 minutes daily* phonics (Reception and Key Stage 1)

*45 minutes (KS1) to 1 hour (KS2)* maths work

*45 minutes (KS1) to 1 hour (KS2)* English work – this may include the editing and re-drafting of written work – in school, pupils would not simply produce and submit a piece of writing without having sought to refine it

*1 hour* other set work - History, Geography, Science, R.E., Art

*15 minutes* P.E.

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in a caring, happy Christian environment**



We are aware that younger children in particular need a great deal of support with their learning. Teachers are mindful of this when setting work for the children and endeavour to provide activities that the children may be able to access more independently. Unfortunately, the nature of the Early Years and Key Stage 1 curriculums do expect a high level of adult engagement to support and develop the learning of such young children.

As you can see, our provision is in excess of the Government expectation, and allows parents a little flexibility with regards to the completion of work. Along with the teachers, I do monitor the children's engagement with their live learning sessions, and the submission of their assignments, but it is difficult for us to know how the children are coping with the amount of work set without you telling us.

If your child is struggling with the amount of work set, and you are finding it difficult (or impossible!) to keep on top of things, please do let us know. Whilst I sadly do not have a magic wand to wave, and I cannot promise that we will be able to make everything alright for you, I can assure you that we will do all we can to help you.

On the other hand, I am sure that some of you would like us to increase our offer! We have given much thought to the Government expectations and, in consultation with the Tenax Schools Trust, have decided that an increased offer in terms of live and/or recorded lessons would actually detract from the on-going feedback and interaction the teachers are able to offer.

As a staff, we considered at great length how best to support the children during this lockdown. We recognised that the remote provision offered last time did not engage all pupils as fully as we would have liked, and did not allow us to interact with those children who were not in school in an effective way. We had an incredibly high number of Key Worker and Vulnerable pupils in school last time, meaning we needed to have all of our teaching staff in school to teach them. This meant we had very little capacity to deliver remote education in a meaningful way. This time around, we have taken a different approach. We have a reduced number of critical worker children in school, due, in large part, to an increased awareness of the risk posed to children and their families by sending them into school unless working parents have no alternative. Our smaller bubbles of children in school are superbly supported by Teaching Assistants, who work with the children to complete the work set by the teachers. This has allowed us to protect our teachers and have them deliver remote education off site. We are acutely aware that if a teacher becomes ill, remote learning will come to an abrupt halt for their class, as we do not have the staffing capacity to cover teacher absence. Thus we are trying to minimise the risk of a teacher contracting COVID-19, due to the impact it would have on an entire class, both in and out of school.

Teachers were very keen to ensure that they have the opportunity to engage with all children each day during this lockdown. However, we are also mindful of the demands placed on families with limited access to the internet, and with limited devices for the children to use. Thus we decided to offer a shorter daily live lesson to check in with all of the children and to explain the day's learning activities, with the rest of the work to be completed independently. In addition to providing feedback on all work submitted to them, teachers are available on Teams throughout the course of the school day to support the children, by answering questions, providing further explanation and reassurance and also offering additional live meetings as and when required. Teachers and teaching assistants have hosted small group or individual sessions on Teams to address specific issues, and I know that this will continue as we move forwards. In addition, Mrs Reeves and Mrs Newington are also hosting live sessions with pupils, based on their individual needs and required support, from Monday.

I shall be talking to the children in my weekly live sessions about how they are finding this experience, and what more we can do to support them. At the end of next week, I shall send home a very short survey about remote learning to ascertain what is working well and what is not working quite so well, with a view to reviewing our provision if it is appropriate to do so.

From talking to the children this week, and reading the comments that many of you have made about our provision, it is clear that many families have acknowledged the improvements that

have been made to the home learning this year. Many children spoke positively about seeing their teachers and friends each day. They also commented favourably on the feedback they have received from their teachers throughout the course of the day, and how this support and engagement is motivating them. A number of families have expressed their relief around having more of an established routine this time around, feeling that this has helped their children to focus on their learning and has also taken some of the pressure away from parents – it is very clear to the children that the work is set and monitored by the teachers, not their parents, which can make a huge difference to family relationships in an already stressful time.

We have been very pleased with the engagement of children with the live sessions and the assignments that have been set for them. We are reminding the children of the need to focus their messages on work, not chat, and also to refrain from using emojis and text-speak, both in their messages and also in their written work, as it is very easy to slip into informality when not physically engaging with teachers in school. It is also easy to get out of routine, and to help with the transition back into school when we return, we would ask that children are properly dressed for their live sessions and engage in them as they would in class (not eating, or sending messages to their friends, for example!).

I am very mindful of the fact that children will be spending a large proportion of their time now typing, rather than actually handwriting, and we would like to remind families that children are both permitted and encouraged to continue with physically writing during the course of the day. If children do write, we would ask that they use a writing pencil or handwriting pen, please – we have had some work submitted that has been written in crayon and felt tip, which is both difficult to read and does not support the high standard of presentation we know the children are capable of achieving.

We would ask children to keep any work that has not been submitted (for example, early drafts and workings out) and to bring this to school when they return, please. Please do not worry if some of this has already made its way into the recycling, however!

I do apologise for the length of this letter, however, I just wanted to provide an update on our remote provision and to acknowledge the demands that this is undoubtedly placing on you, as parents. *Please do not feel that you are alone.* I know that this is, once again, an incredibly difficult period for families and wish to reassure you that we are here to help wherever we can. Please be assured that this situation is not of our choosing. We would all much rather have the children in school, but obviously only if it is safe for us to do so. At this current time, we must continue to heed Government advice and legislation, and only open for those vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers, whose parents need their children in school to allow them to discharge their critical worker responsibilities.

We all have good days and bad days, we all have times when we feel that the day has been a disaster and we wish we could erase it and start again. Sometimes we just need to accept that we are doing the best we can and remember that tomorrow is another day.

I wish you all a lovely, relaxing weekend – and one in which you can hopefully simply view a screen as a source of entertainment and not one of stress.

Kind regards

Tina Holditch  
Headteacher