



## St Joseph's and St Gregory's Parent Bulletin May 2020

### Dear Families

I was expecting to be thousands of miles across the ocean from you at this point in the year. Instead, I am only a few miles away, but no nearer as far as social contact is concerned.

Since returning, I have worked with all the staff to provide as much support and guidance as we can for your children, whatever your home circumstances might be. In this issue, I would like to share three pieces of information:

### Return to School

A message from our school about our commitment to support all our families during the current crisis and our plans for a safe return.

On Sunday evening, you will have heard the Prime Minister talk about some children returning to school *at the earliest by 1<sup>st</sup> June*. He suggested schools *may be in a position to begin the phased re-opening, in stages, beginning with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children*. The government will be setting out *detailed guidance on how to make it work in schools*. The Prime Minister said that all this will be *driven by science, the data and public health*.

As a school staff we would love to have all our children back in school, as soon as it is safe to do so. However, our first priority must be the safety of everyone in the school community. Any plans to increase the number of children in school have to be practical and manageable.

Like you, we have only just received this news, and at this stage cannot answer all your questions. We are waiting to receive more information from the government about what this means for our school. We will consider all the guidelines given to us by the Department for Education, the Local Authority and our Academy Trust.

We know this news may have made you or your children anxious and caused more uncertainty. Please rest assured we will consider the views of parents, (and individual circumstances where necessary) in making our plans. A short survey will be sent to gather your feedback once we have a plan to share – please do respond to help us make good choices for your children.

In the short term, nothing has changed and we will provide further information in the coming days and weeks once we are able to do so.

## Parent Survey Feedback

It has been fantastic to receive so many positive responses to our recent survey. Thank you for spending time telling us how learning is going at home for your child/children.

Firstly, we would like to say thank you for your support in these difficult times. Many parents commented on the support and advice they had from staff across the school – we appreciate your feedback. We have considered your responses; kept the things you like, adapted those you felt could have been better and tried to address any challenges or concerns. The main points and actions are summarised here, but a link to a more detailed analysis will be sent by your class teacher.

**47% of our parents responded to the survey** – we recognise that the responses only tell us about half of our children's needs.

**Most families have broadband access and 80% use a desktop computer, laptop or tablet.** However we understand these devices may be shared and, responding to some feedback comments, have advised our teachers to send more practical activities which can be completed in school books.

**74% said email was the best way to receive work** and appreciated it being sent weekly and daily. Some preferred Purple Mash; with some comments about having all work on this format for their children. Please do use the resources on this site more if it suits your child and family circumstances.

**The majority of families are spending between 1 and 4 hours on home learning;** the lower number for younger children and higher for key stage 2.

**About half the children used Purple Mash** the most, with an equal number across the other programmes.

Video instruction was the focus of many comments; **about a third of families favouring Purple Mash and a third Youtube.** We appreciate video instruction would help children to engage more fully, help to explain learning and support those families for whom English is not their first language. Each year group has tried to use more video instruction; using sites like BBC Bitesize and Oak Academy or making their own instructional videos (this does take some time). Although having a set time of the day for instructional learning appears practical, many families have several children using one device which would make this difficult for them.

Some parents mentioned resources as a challenge. Unfortunately, we have not been able to organise borrowing books from the school library safely. However, teachers are able to direct you to online reading resources or look on the website in Home Learning. Please contact the school if you need further stationery resources.

**If your child has a barrier to learning because their English is not good enough yet, please contact their class teacher who may be able to offer another resource for your child to use.**

We really value the response you have sent, and have tried to adapt the home learning to address some of your challenges. Please do communicate with your child's class teacher if you have particular concerns about your child. They will do everything they can to help.

Finally, we appreciate the enormous job you have taken on in supporting and guiding your child in their home learning. Many of our teachers have children too, and understand the demands of working whilst engaging your child/children in their own learning. Thank you for all your efforts. Please do not worry if you do not complete all the work; talking and reading with your child are probably the most advantageous thing you can do to support learning for a primary age child. We will work together when children return to school to identify and fill any gaps in learning.

# Home Learning

Guidance and resources to help parents with engaging their children in home learning

We are mindful that many parents are still working; are struggling to engage their children in home learning; have limited access to digital platforms and may find reading and writing English a challenge. Many of you asked for tips to overcome these barriers.

**Short sessions with snacks & breaks in between.** Younger children may only concentrate for 15-30 mins at a time. Older children may be able to extend this to 45 mins, but it will depend on the child. One of our teachers has set up a shop with her daughter. All the snacks are priced and her daughter has to earn money through home learning activities to buy her snacks. This has helped to engage her and limit the number of times she asks for snacks!

**Have a timetable and vary the activities.** Having a structured day helps children know how long they have to work at an activity and what is coming next. Have a sit down activity followed by something more physical or creative, and vary this throughout the day. Timetable screentime, so your child knows when it is their turn. Most of the learning can be carried out using pencil and paper. (Contact school if you need more).

**Involve children in organising their learning.** When you receive the weekly activities, talk to your child/children about when you will be able to help them. Older children can work on their own, however they will need to be encouraged to do this. Often children will say they can't do something, when they mean, I don't want to. Try doing something they can do first. Organise the home learning to suit your family needs. Do not feel you have to include everything; do as much as you can.

**The importance of mental health and wellbeing.** We understand you and your child may be anxious about the home learning, as well as the wider situation across the country. Please look at the resources on our website to support you and your child during these times. Do let your teacher or the school know if you or your child need greater support than is available. We will do everything we can to support you.

Links:

[www.stjosephsandstgregorys.com](http://www.stjosephsandstgregorys.com)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

For the time being, most learning will continue at home and we will do our best to support you and your child in this. Every day we increase our offer and introduce new and more varied resources. As soon as we have a safe plan for the return of more children to school we will share it with you.

Stay safe.

**Lisa Sumpter**

*Headteacher*

*St Joseph's and St Gregory's Primary School*