



April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you all had a restful Easter break and welcome to our very first remote summer term.

We've all had to adapt to new ways of working, so I wanted to take the chance to say what an amazing job you're doing supporting your child's wellbeing and learning during this time.

It has definitely been a strange and challenging time, so it is understandable if you and your child feel anxious and frustrated at the moment. We are here for you every step of the way as we figure this all out together.

We really miss having the pupils in school, but we must continue to follow the government's guidance to keep everyone in our community safe. As such, we will continue to open the school to children of critical workers and those requiring additional support as well as providing remote learning opportunities for those students working at home.

Every phase of the closure period will present us with different challenges but it is important we remain positive and maintaining a flexible approach is essential.

Having had the opportunity to talk to lots of parents/ carers and students over the last few weeks, I have collated some key responses to **frequently asked questions**, which will hopefully both reassure you and support you in creating a positive learning environment at home.

We are struggling to motivate our children to do work at home.

Be realistic about what you can do. Home is very important right now for parents working, children learning and families spending time together. You are **not expected** to become teachers and your children are not expected to learn as they do in school. Do not put pressure on yourself to create a perfect learning programme or fill every hour with schooling.

Simply **providing your children with some structure** at home and **creating a routine** will help them to adapt. For example, eating breakfast at the same time and make sure they are dressed before starting the 'school' day.

Talk to your children about how they would like their day structured and how that might work with your own responsibilities. It is a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it will give them some ownership.

Encourage your children to talk about their own interests and passions and think of ways to incorporate these with learning.

Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over.

Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life

Reassure your child that the school and their teachers are there for them and will continue to teach them- but just not from school.

Be mindful of what you see on social media and remember that every family is different. If you are struggling or finding things challenging for any reason, reach out for support and help.

Make time for breaks and exercise and take care of your own health and wellbeing. This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle.

I am worried that my child is going to fall behind with their learning. Most of the work being set is revision of work that has already been taught in school. Should they not be covering new material?

We hope you can understand that we cannot deliver the same sort of education we do when the school is fully open, but your children will not miss out academically by not being in school at the moment. We have tried to keep everyone's workloads – both pupils learning at home and those in schools – comparable, appropriate and realistic during this turbulent period.

Please do not worry about your children getting behind with learning. Everyone's in the same boat, and when things get back to normal we will make sure we get everyone back on track.

For practical reasons it may be difficult for teachers to introduce some new content to pupils, particularly during the early phase of these changes. That is not to say this cannot happen but it may be helpful to recognise from the outset that ploughing through lots of new content might lead to misconceptions or gaps where some pupils have understood it and others have not. Teachers will re-structure the curriculum to determine what new content can be delivered if any.

A greater focus on **repetition and consolidation of knowledge**, with regular revisiting and embedding learning will benefit everyone. The key being to grow confidence and a sense of sustained achievement (remembering this may be a marathon not a sprint).

This will vary according to subject and key stage but the normal job teachers do of explaining concepts, correcting misconceptions and making links with other learning is likely to be trickier when done remotely.

Consolidation of prior learning, however, is beneficial. We know that what pupils store in long term memory can help them to learn more, so consolidation is not wasted time or a lack of 'progress'. This is potentially a good opportunity to help pupils become fluent in key aspects of the curriculum and thus lay solid foundations for when school resumes.

What additional resources can we use to support learning and engage our children during this closure period?

Whilst our teachers are sourcing the best educational resources to support your child's learning at home. There is a vast amount of free educational material available to support remote learning.

As you have probably seen, on Monday the BBC launched an education package across TV and online, featuring celebrities and teachers, helping to keep children learning at home and supporting parents- **BBC Bitesize Daily** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>. There are **150 online lessons** for Years 1-10 in English, Maths and other core subjects on the BBC Bitesize website. There are also **new Bitesize Daily programmes** broadcast on BBC iPlayer and via the BBC Red Button.

In response to the closure, the DfE have also worked with the sector-led **Oak National Academy** to launch an online classroom and resource hub. The Academy offers 180 video lessons each week for schools to use, across a broad range of subjects. The lessons cover children in Reception through to Year 10 and are free to use by both teachers and young people. The Oak National Academy programme can be accessed via <https://www.thenational.academy/>

In addition, the DfE have brought together an initial list of **online educational resources to help children to learn at home**. These websites have been identified by some of the country's leading educational experts and offer a wide range of support and resources for pupils of all ages. They are currently being offered for free.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education>

Individual resources cannot replace a school's properly planned curriculum, and the resources in this list are not intended to do so. They may be useful for parents in considering how they could support their children's education, but they should not be used in place of existing resources, which schools may be using as part of their continued provision for pupils' education at this time.

Can teachers use on-line technology to deliver lessons live to our children

You may have seen different approaches from other schools in the news, such as providing live lessons online.

We have decided not to do this because we know that some families in our community do not have the technology/time/circumstances at home to support this kind of learning at the moment so we are focusing on supporting pupils to learn in the most widely accessible ways possible. In addition, some of our teachers have their own care responsibilities at home, such as their own young children, and it can be difficult to fit these around live lessons.

However, please be reassured that the teachers are sourcing the most appropriate educational resources to support your children.

My child cannot get onto Show My Homework.

Please contact the school so we can support you.

What happens if my child is unable to upload or submit work electronically?

Teachers are aware that some students may have trouble uploading work electronically. Whilst teachers may put requests for work to be returned in this way, they do understand that in some cases this may be difficult. Your child will not receive any sanctions if they are unable to do this.

If you cannot submit work, simply encourage your child to keep all the work they have completed in a folder so they can bring it into school to support their learning on our return.

If you simply do not have the email address of the member of staff, please send the work to the Head of the Department (see closure letter) and ask for it to be forwarded on to the class teacher. Teachers have been asked to pop their email onto Show My Homework to help with this issue.

The amount of work on Show My Homework is unmanageable and very overwhelming.

Remote teaching is a learning curve for all. In the first few weeks of closure, teachers uploaded as much work as possible to ensure your children had the work to access at home.

As we all adjust to this new way of working, the volume of work set should become more manageable.

We do understand the pressures this creates but please reassure your child that they should try to complete as much as they can but not worry if they cannot do everything all at once. Deadlines are set as guidance and therefore families should manage the work around what is achievable.

My child is unable to log onto the school email system via the website.

Please email it@netherthorpe.derbyshire.sch.uk and our Technical team will be able to support you with this matter.

My child needs some extra support with the work as it is too difficult for them to access.

Please let us know and we will be able to support you. Your child can communicate with their teachers either via email or directly through Show My Homework.

Teachers will be happy to support individuals with any issues big or small- please just ask.

We do not have internet access or a printer at home

If you do not have internet access, let us know and we will look at what we can do to support your child during this period.

We are aware that a number of departments have uploaded multiple paged work booklets for students. There are no expectations that your child prints these off to complete them. Children can look at the resource online and record any work on paper.

Why are many of the uploaded documents in PDF format? My child is unable to type into the document.

In the early stages of closure, a number of families requested for documentation to be in PDF format as without the most up to date Office application children were unable to open some of the documents at home.

The school provides access to Office applications and remote access to files stored in school through the Student Portal (<https://portal.netherthorpe.derbyshire.sch.uk>). For best compatibility, you should use a Microsoft browser such as Edge or Internet Explorer. You will need to login with your school username and password. (Any issues, please email it@netherthorpe.derbyshire.sch.uk)

In addition, you can access Office 365 for free by signing up with Microsoft using your school email address at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/education/students>

Whilst our teachers continue to set plenty of tasks for students to access over the summer term, please remind your child to take breaks away from screens as well, and make time for having fun and connecting with friends and family.

Remember, if you have any concerns about helping your child learn or you need any other support from the school, please do not hesitate in contacting us. You can email staff directly using the contact lists provided on the initial closure letter or just give us a call on 01246 472220. The reception is staffed Monday to Friday from 8.30- 3.10pm.

The well-being of the students is our priority. Over the next few weeks, one of our staff will contact your family to see if you require any further support and to talk to your child. Please take this opportunity to discuss any concerns you may have and we will do everything we can to resolve them.

While we cannot say yet when we will be able to open the school fully, rest assured that we will continue doing our utmost to keep pupils learning and the school connected.

Thank you for your support and stay safe

Kind Regards,

Helen McVicar

Deputy Headteacher