



# PARENTS' FORUM

29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

“Microsoft Teams” meeting – 28 parents attended

## SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The SDP for the current year was approved by Governors on Wednesday this week and will shortly be available for parents to view on the website. Whilst responding to the pandemic is dominating the school's priorities, we are still moving forward with our review of the curriculum, with a view to making sure it is up to date, relevant, and consistent with current issues. We are particularly looking at ways of integrating environmental education across the subjects and topics, and reviewing the representation of different characteristics such as ethnicity and gender within the curriculum.

The main headings on the SDP are:

- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Safeguarding
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Inclusion
- Marketing

With regard to the latter, it was noted that there is currently a fall in the population of primary school aged children, so whilst the school remains full, we need to make sure that we keep attracting applications for places.

## ASSESSMENT

The government has confirmed that there will be no SATS for Year 6 this year. They have also cancelled the Year 4 Multiplication Check, which was due to be introduced last summer, but wasn't because of the first lockdown.

We are not aware yet of any plans for the DfE to ask us to submit any form of assessment data this year.

Teachers will continue to assess children's progress against our own HJS Assessment Framework for Reading, Writing and Maths but at this point it is unclear how this will feed into our end of year reporting. It is very hard to assess accurately children's work completed during lockdown. Although we can give feedback on work that they submit to teachers, they are not working in the usual classroom environment. We do not know how independently the work is completed, and it is hard for some children to complete and submit the work we set.

We will be setting up Parent Consultation meetings after half term. Teachers will have conversations with parents about how they are getting on with the current set up, but we

will not be talking specifically about progress against those HJS Assessment Framework targets.

Teachers are reviewing the Framework in order to adapt it to suit the current year; since some ground was not covered last year, it is not reasonable to expect all children to meet our usual expectations for the end of this year.

## **SCHOOL PROJECTS**

We are still doing exciting things, in spite of the challenges. Mr Parr's Green Ambassadors are pressing ahead this year with plans to redevelop the old pond area as a nature space. Mr Parr is also leading a group called Agents of Change. This is an NW24 initiative. Children have been selected in 8 schools to participate together in a project which helps them to lead changes for the better in their own schools. The children are selected from the group that are eligible for Pupil Premium – these are children who do not necessarily have many of the advantages in their lives that others do. The project aims to give them confidence in their ability to make an impact not only on their own lives but also on the lives of others.

## **HOME LEARNING**

Mr Barber thanked everyone for sending in feedback and submitting suggestions for discussion. Staff have been very pleased to receive lots of positive messages sent in by email since the start of term recognizing their hard work and appreciating the range and quality of material provided in Teams for home learning.

Inevitably, there are many ideas for developing and improving what is a very new concept for both educators and families. All of the feedback received is very carefully considered, and in the weekly staff meetings there is much creative discussion about what has worked well, what can be learnt from experience, and what can be improved. Each week, there are tweaks and enhancements that are made in response to these discussions.

### **Can we have more live lessons?**

This is probably the most controversial question of the moment, so we tackled it head on. There are several suggestions in emails submitted on this topic, all of which have been very carefully considered.

HJS is currently broadcasting live almost non stop from 8:30 Monday morning until 2:00 Friday afternoon. The timetable has been very carefully planned so that live sessions for different year groups do not clash. Each year's teachers have customised the use of the live time slots available to them to suit the needs of their year group.

Staff are having ongoing professional discussions about what works well, what has most impact, what is most manageable for them, and most inclusive for the children. Each week, we see teachers trying new things, learning from each other, being more skillful at managing the technology and more confident about how best to guide each child's learning.

Ofsted have published [“myth busting” guidance](#) about what makes good remote education. “Some unhelpful myths exist about remote education, which are not based on evidence.

These include that:

- remote education is fundamentally different to other forms of teaching/learning

- remote education is a different curriculum/offer to the content that would be delivered normally
- the best forms of remote education are digital
- the best way to deliver remote education is always through live lessons
- the most important thing is pupils' engagement

None of these things are necessarily true.”

We had a very informative discussion about how best to use the live sessions available, to complement the other materials available and other channels of communication.

Staff are currently engaged in discussion about the relative merits of sessions where children can drop in if they need help or have questions, and sessions where they are all expected to attend, where they may leave after the initial input if they feel confident enough to get on independently.

An interesting point was raised about how “drop in” sessions may be viewed by some children.

- My child feels that if they go to a drop in they will be thought of as not so clever – it's a question of PR – how do you overcome it being seen this way?
- They feel that if they drop in, they need to have some prepared questions to ask.
- My child isn't motivated unless it is compulsory: they wouldn't miss registration, but don't see any reason to go to something that is optional.

We talked about the different ways that teachers are using to explain the work – some using a bit of registration time, some uploading video messages, some directing children to their prerecorded lessons.

We also talked about how sessions where everyone is expected to attend might be used, for example to explain what the learning objective is, what resources they need, and what the expected outcome should look like; or to talk about common questions or misconceptions that have cropped up during the week. This is a topic that is being discussed amongst the staff.

We talked about some of the technical, practical and safeguarding implications of various ways of running live lessons.

- Could we broadcast lessons from the classrooms to the children at home?
  - Technically, yes, but it would be complex to organize and difficult to manage. It would pose an unacceptable challenge, and indeed risk, to the teacher in the classroom, and be of limited benefit to the majority of the children at home. With all the other pressures they are dealing with, it would be completely unacceptable to ask our in-school staff to perform in front of a camera whilst simultaneously managing the children in the room.
  - In our classrooms we have some of our most vulnerable children. Safeguarding is a very high priority, and we cannot put them at risk by broadcasting class activity.
  - The teachers in school contribute to the planning for all children, and in some cases they are also recording explanations that are watched both by the learners at home and those in the classroom.

- We are looking at possibilities for connecting children at home with children at school, as this was an issue discussed by School Council last week. When there were small numbers of children self-isolating last term, it was lovely to invite them to a Teams meeting with their class, so that they could keep in touch. However, the class in school includes children from all three classes in the year, and if we invite children at home to join us, we would be trying to manage a meeting with more than 60 participants.
- Can teachers at home teach children in school as well as home learners?
  - French and German lessons delivered live to Year 4 and 5 have proved that it is possible to do, but that does not mean that it is either easy or valid for all teachers to do the same thing. The content, structure and style of delivery has to be skillfully matched to every type of lesson.
  - Some of our staff are finding that it is easier to explain and demonstrate the work in a live meeting, whilst others find they can provide clearer instruction by prerecording. Learners will get better value from a well prepared video than from a live session that suffers from any of the glitches that we all know can affect live meetings.
  - As the Ofsted report on remote learning says, “There are some specific difficulties in doing live lessons. It can be hard to build in interaction and flexibility. This means that giving feedback can actually be less effective than when we use recorded lesson segments followed by interactive chats, or tasks and feedback. Using recorded lessons produced externally can allow you to easily draw on high-quality lessons taught by expert subject teachers.”
- Can live lessons be recorded, to be watched later by children who cannot attend?
  - This is an issue that we are currently grappling with. The way schools’ Microsoft licences are set up by default, meeting recordings are available for download after the meeting by everyone who attended. If anything inappropriate were to be in that recording (for example, something on camera or an inappropriate audible comment) we would want to edit that out before making it available. It is much easier for us to share pre-recorded lessons, because we can be sure that the content is suitable for sharing.

HJS cannot and will not expect children to sit in front of a screen for live lessons every day. Schools that you may have heard of that are doing this are likely to be secondary schools or independent schools. Our colleagues in Bristol are certainly not providing any more by way of live teaching than we are, and for good, professionally considered reasons.

Here is a snapshot of the live activity in Term 3 Week 4:

	Registration					Morning lesson				Lunch	Team meeting				Afternoon lesson			
	8:30	8:50	9:10	9:30	9:50	10:15	10:45	11:15	11:45		1:00				1:30	2:00	2:30	3:00
Mon	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3	Assembly Live	Y6 Maths	Y5 Ma and Eng		Y3 Spelling		E	K	R	H	Y6 Eng		Y4 Maths	Y3 Story
Tues	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3	Assembly pre- recorded	Y6 Maths	Y5 Ma and Eng	Y4 Maths	Y3 Music		E	K	R	H	Y6 Eng			Y3 Story
Wed	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3		Y6 Maths	Y5 Ma and Eng	Y4 German	Y3 Maths		E	K	R	H	Y6 Eng	Y5 French	Y4 Eng	Y3 Story
Thur	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3		Y6 Maths	Y5 Ma and Eng		Y3 Maths		E	K	R	H	Y6 Eng		Y4 Sci	Y3 Story
Fri	Y6	Y5	Y4	Y3		Y6 Science	Y5 Ma and Eng	Y4 Ma and Eng	Y3 Topic chat						Assembl Y Live			

Each year group's teachers use their experience and professional judgement to timetable their week, and to use live sessions in a way that works for the children and for them. (It must be remembered that some of our staff members are managing home learning for their own children at the same time as doing this. Parents who are struggling to manage their own work while also managing their children will know only too well how challenging this is.)

It is not appropriate to compare one year group with another, or one staff member with another, or one school with another. Every teacher is working longer hours than ever, doing all that they can to deliver the highest quality of teaching and support that they are able. They are listening to parental feedback and reflecting every week on what they have learnt.

### Assignments

We've got a split of views on the number and timing of Assignments, and it is impossible for us to satisfy everyone:

- I'd like all the assignments for the week to be posted at the beginning of the week, so that we can plan accordingly.
- I'd like my child to put the same amount of effort into every piece of work, because they never know which one will pop up as an Assignment during the week.

(Apologies for paraphrasing parental comment – I hope I've captured the gist.)

This is something else that has been fed back to staff for their consideration.

The number of assignments per week is something that year groups have been given the freedom to choose for themselves, based on what it would be helpful for them to see handed in. As we get more settled into the system, we ask them to keep under review whether it is appropriate to ask for at least one English and one Maths piece to be submitted each week, or for this to vary from week to week depending on what is being covered. Teachers are using other ways of finding out how children are getting on with the work. Some are using the afternoon Team meetings to get children to show their work. Others are using drop in sessions to look at work and edit. Some children submit work to teachers using Chat, and get feedback that way. Other share work on the Channels, and get feedback from their classmates.

We do not expect children to hand in every piece of work that they do, but if it is set as an Assignment, we would like to see it, and we will make a note to follow up if it is not submitted. There may be all sorts of reasons why work is not submitted. We will not criticize, or sanction children, but will try to support in whatever way we can.

Teachers will respond to all work submitted in Assignments, and usually they will also provide feedback on work submitted by other means. (Looking at the work is very time consuming, as the two teachers at home have more than two thirds of the children to feed back to.)

## **CATCHING UP**

A question was asked about proposals to help children catch up when schools reopen for all.

The lessons we are teaching currently are the ones we would be teaching if children had come back to school in January. We are continuing to build from where we started in September, which in itself was based on assessment of what children had missed during the first lockdown.

We are absolutely confident in children's ability to catch up over time – they have years of education ahead of them, and we have no doubt that they will get to where they need to get. No-one's child has fallen behind, because everyone is in the same position, and everyone will be moving forward together. In some subjects, more than others, it is possible to speed up coverage of the content required to get back on track. In other subjects, the catch up may seem slower at first, but it will even out over time. Children in Year 6 may not start secondary school with quite as much confidence as we might normally expect, but all Year 7s will be in the same boat and our secondary colleagues will of course pick them up from where they are at. Similarly, all of our children may not reach the end of this year with the full set of skills we normally expect, but once back in the HJS learning environment, we have every confidence that they will respond to the challenges and push themselves to succeed. Children want to learn. They haven't stopped learning during lockdown.

Our greatest concern is for those children who do not have such good access to parental support at home. There may be all sorts of reasons for this, and when children do return to school, we will do everything possible to overcome any gaps that may have developed due to the diversity of opportunities children have had to progress with their learning during lockdown. But those who have benefited from parents who take their education and care as seriously as you do will be well placed to catch up, and even forge ahead with greater gusto when we come out of this pandemic.