

From the Head: S L Patterson B.Ed. (Hons)



# TRURO SCHOOL PREP

17<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope that you enjoyed a good, but different, Easter break and that you were all able to have some time to rest. I have never written a 'welcome back to the new term' letter that reads quite like this before. I have waited a couple of days before writing to you because I wanted to include feedback from the first three days of interactive remote education in this communication.

I hope that this letter is helpful (and doesn't sound too bossy!) but I wanted to share our learning from this week with you. I have said it in previous letters but regarding home/remote learning, please only do what you can manage for your own sanity and well-being, and the well-being of your family. You are not under any pressure whatsoever from us to complete all the assignments that are set; we are going to be setting work for each lesson but only complete what is possible within your own family situation.

I have smiled a number of times this week from some correspondence that parents have sent where their child in Year 5 or 6 has taken to this 'like a duck to water' and are so confident that they 'shoo' their parents away! If your child is in Years 1-4, they will need further support – the younger your child, the more support they will probably need. I know I am repeating myself but please only do what you can; if supporting your child means that you are being taken away from your own work/running your own business/looking after other children, please only do the basics (English and maths) and we will narrow any gaps when we are all back and learning together again in school.

An important point to note is that if you don't get immediate feedback from a member of staff, or a teacher is not conducting a 'live' lesson, this will be because that teacher is also in school teaching the children of key workers and literally can't do both. We have a three-week rota running where approximately 1/3 of staff are in school at any one time with children (ranging in number from about 20 to 30 and from Nursery to Year 6); if they don't appear to be as present as others, it is because they are trying to be in two places at once!

If you have any questions about any aspect of the remote learning (or anything else that we can help you with) please do let us know and we will get back to you as soon as we possibly can. We are all working full days, whether in school or not, and are here to support you and the children.

We have had some questions regarding the difference between using Everest and Teams. The best way to explain this is that Everest will signpost you to where you (your child) needs to go/what needs to be done for each lesson. At the moment, we are posting work in Everest and also in Teams to make sure that it is definitely accessed but, ultimately, Everest will just be the place where you go for the overview of each week and each day, and will then be signposted as to what to do next.

The teachers are reporting back that there has been much excitement around the novelty of the new interactive system (similar to the beginning of term excitement and buzz) but we do need to lay some ground rules so that the system is as effective as we can make it. Teachers will be talking to the children about these rules next week but please join the staff in informing and reiterating to your child the following behaviours whilst using Teams.

- The visual and audio options (camera and microphone) for the children should only be used as directed by the teacher. It is wonderful for the children to be able to see and hear each other for the first couple of minutes of a lesson but if the teacher asks that the cameras and microphones are switched off at any point during a lesson, all children must follow these instructions. We are finding the lessons are smoother and clearer when the cameras are off.
- The children should communicate with the teacher through the 'chat' option at the side of the screen (Years 3-6). If a child does want to ask a question verbally, they should check with their teacher via the chat option that they can turn their microphone on. This will avoid multiple voices that overlap and cause confusion.
- Children shouldn't be meeting their friends on Teams outside the set meeting times. We have concerns about conversations that are not monitored so please ensure that a teacher is always present before your child starts conversations.
- As above – children should aim to join the lesson at the time the meeting is scheduled; some are showing up very early (sometimes 15 minutes early). We are delighted with this keenness but without a teacher there, they are unmonitored.
- We are finding that using earphones cuts background noise and helps with clarity. Please don't go and buy earphones just for this purpose but if you do have them, they are proving helpful with audio.
- The children should not be eating during lessons – rustling packaging is causing a problem!
- Children should not use the phone option and should avoid using emojis/gifs/memes in the chat option; this is distracting for other children and doesn't enhance their learning.
- A reminder to the children that any resources uploaded in Teams can be found by clicking in the 'files' tab in the correct channel.
- Ignore the 'general' channel – the channel to use is the one for each specific week that is dated.
- If you have more than one child working remotely on different devices, there could be interference between the devices so physically moving one further away will help with this.

The list is quite long but covers our learning points from the past three days! I am sure that you will have some that aren't included here and that, as the days progress, there will be more to share but if you can support us with the points above, I am confident that the children's learning will be calmer and they will be more productive.

Thank you so much to those of you who have managed to feed back, and for your positive response to the interactive nature of the teaching and learning. I know that there have been teething problems and sometimes out-and-out disasters when wi-fi or the technology lets us down. Thank you for your patience and please know that we are doing all we can to make this learning experience as positive and as thorough as we can. If there are any 'top tips' for us that you have, please don't hesitate to let us know so that together we can support the children.

We miss you all and can't wait to be back together very soon.

Wishing you all ongoing strength and protection.

Sarah Patterson

