

On Wednesday 20 January, Truro School hosted a virtual presentation and Q&A for Parents and Guardians regarding remote learning and teaching. Below is a summary of the Question areas and Answers. Further information can be found via the Lockdown Learning 2021 page on our website, which also hosts the slides from the PowerPoint that accompanied this Q&A:

Q. Screen Time. What is the school's approach to the risks of too much screen time for the children?

A. We are very mindful of this, and are trying to balance the reality that screen time is necessary to deliver interactive remote learning, but that too much screen time is unhealthy. It is important to remember that 'remote learning' is not the same thing as 'digital learning', and likewise that quality of learning is not measured by simply the quantity of time with a teacher on screen. It comes from the quality of thinking time facilitated for and undertaken by the pupil.

Some lessons will require more screen time than others. What we are doing is encouraging teachers to plan in lesson breaks in double lessons and pupils to take their 5-minute break between lessons, as well as lunchtimes and break times – away from their screens. Whilst we have decided to maintain the core structure and routine of the 'normal' school day, therefore, we would still encourage pupils to go outside, however briefly, when they can. This is an issue we discuss as staff and also with pupils. Our senior prefect team were suggesting we encourage pupils to stop working at 4pm and return to and consolidation or homework later on, for example, rather than ploughing on at the end of the school day. This is also good advice. Please do also discuss a similarly sensible approach to screen time with your children where it is unrelated to school study.

Q. Technology and Resources. Can the children access everything they need from one device and is there a simple way of understanding where resources are located and how to get hold of them?

A. The children can access all interactive teaching from one device via TEAMS. Teams also is where resources and documents are stored and accessed via class group channels. Where any teacher or department uses any other platform, they will share this with pupils, but it should not require an extra device. Homework is communicated via Everest for 4th Years and above. Teams is the key platform, however.

At the moment we are also exploring the potential for a school run postal service to deliver key resources/materials direct to homes. This might enable learning with resources such as clay, for example, access to text books from the school site, or reduced home printing costs for key handouts. Planning is at an early stage, and we cannot guarantee this yet, but if we can get this up and running, we would like to.

Q: Camera Use. What are the expectations for cameras being on/off during teaching and learning?

A. Teachers will normally have cameras on to support face to face interaction unless the activity being run requires the screen to be set up otherwise, or in their professional judgement the movement between camera views would have a slowing effect on the pace of the learning. For pupils, we do encourage face to face interaction with cameras on, especially during form time, and in lessons when teachers view it as constructive. Having a blurred background is advised and our safeguarding and pastoral steers on the website give advice about this too, including suitable dress and appearance steers. At the same time, we trust our pupils to want to learn and we are not forcing cameras on for all, all of the time, where this might for some

actually reduce their willingness to engage. In addition, we are aware that where band width is stretched, having the camera off can strengthen the connection for audio and chat, which are key for learning.

Q Social Time. Can the school support social interactivity – peer based and between pupils and teachers?

A. We ask all pupils to check in with their tutors, verbally and with cameras on in daily tutorial periods. This is deliberately being managed as social as well as pastoral time. We are also looking at ways to increase the use of break out rooms within Teams to facilitate smaller interactive discussions during some lessons or activities. Teachers regularly make use of private channels within a class team to provide a mechanism for one to one discussion between pupil and teacher

Some parents have asked for more activity, others have asked for less. With parents we can encourage social interaction outside of school, however we are reluctant to structure even more screen time for pupils even if it for a social reason.

Our prefect team have also been busy thinking how they can support in this area and they have just allocated prefect teams to each school year group precisely to enable more peer to peer contact and support for younger pupils to help with study or motivation. It's a great idea and we are encouraging it.

Q. Enrichment Opportunities and Activities. What is being planned in regard to voluntary enrichment or extension activities?

A. Having set up our core provision for all as outlined in the documents we have shared via our new Lockdown learning 2021 webpage on the school website, we are planning to add guidance there regarding further and enhanced opportunities. The co-curricular guidance there already outlines a lot of what we are facilitating above the normal routines. This is soon to be followed by guidance over widened pastoral and communications planning. In academic terms, every department is currently putting together its component parts of an academic enhancement menu of opportunities, suggestions and ideas. This will either be shared by subject for all year groups, or by year group for all subjects, depending on what is most accessible when the work is completed. We hope this party of our enhanced educational programme during lockdown will be ready to be shared soon.

Q. Engagement. How can we support pupils who have difficulty engaging?

A. Tutors remain the key point of contact with school. If at home you have concerns, please contact your child's tutor. We ask teachers to do the same thing and to alert tutors if they have concerns too. There will also be systems in place designed specifically for lockdown for staff to review and share patterns of remote engagement to support pastoral and academic intervention where needed. The initiatives outlined above of our prefect team we hope will also help here.

All teachers are available for you to contact by email if you have subject specific questions or concerns. Their email addresses can be found in the linked documents on the Parent Portal. Do contact us if you need to be reminded of the password for this.

Where individuals are really struggling we are used to setting up action plans under normal learning circumstances, and we would expect to do the same thing during lockdown too. We all know this is tough, but, with you, we won't stop trying to find and strengthen the motivations for the children to stay engaged.

Q. Gaps in Practical Learning. What are your plans for practical learning which has been disrupted by lockdown?

A. Some practical learning can be adapted creatively to lockdown but where it cannot, we encourage teachers to re-order their schemes of learning to deliver curriculum that can be effectively studied in lockdown now and to defer areas that need practical activity for later in the year.

Q. Remote Learning. Have we benchmarked our services compared to other schools?

A. Our remote teaching, learning, and wider curriculum delivery in the Spring was very effective indeed. We know that our pupils were able to continue to cover course content and curriculum effectively across that time, to their ongoing benefit. This time we have been able to draw on all that experience to get up and running faster. We are also able to draw on the reflection and wider research that our teaching and learning teams have engaged in since last year and we encourage staff to develop and evolve from last year's approaches, which they are doing. Increased use of visualisers in some remote lessons is one current example. As an incoming Head who saw how another successful school offered remote learning last year, I can assure you that what Truro School is offering is excellent, as well as rightly being still reflective and evolving. Some of our staff are supporting and sharing strategies with teachers from other schools in our wider community, which we encourage as a two-way learning process as well.

Q. Physical Exercise. What can we do to encourage Physical Exercise, including off line?

A. Our PE curriculum is still being delivered alongside our WAA programme and many, many clubs. The co-curricular guide in our Lockdown Learning webpage outlines much of this. You are right that some does still ask for children to be viewing a screen, and we recognise this may not be ideal, but we are seeking to balance instruction with the encouragement and opportunity to exercise away from screens and ideally outdoors. Our school knows the importance of continuing to support wellbeing as well as children's hobbies and passions beyond the classroom.

Q. Classroom management. How are we approaching classroom management?

A. Teachers discuss and share classroom management techniques for promoting strong online learning as they do for classroom learning. Pupils at Truro School undoubtedly have a good work ethic overall, but we know some may struggle at this time. Our approach during lockdown is very much to encourage and praise positive engagement. When living and learning is this tough, we are concerned about the impact of resorting to sanctions from afar. We are taking a wellbeing first approach, therefore, and if that proves less effective, tutors or teachers will work with individuals more directly.

Q. Pupil Voice. Are we asking the children how they feel?

A. Yes, and this is essential. Tutorial time is routinely used to secure feedback for us as a school from the children that we can reflect on to evolve our support and service to them. We also discuss remote learning and support with our prefect team and the Head Boy/Head Girl Team still meet weekly (remotely) with the Head to share ideas and feedback from themselves, their peers, and the school councils. Those councils have already met virtually during this lockdown too.