



The Federation of The Downs & Northbourne Church of England Primary Schools



Chair of Governors: Dr A Eyden

Vice Chair of Governors: Rev D Ridley

"if you have faith as small as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible."

(Matthew: 17 v20)

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21 January 2021

Microsoft Teams

Dear Parents / Guardians,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well. I am writing to update you on how we are planning to add to our current provision for remote learning.

We have been busy exploring different ways to upload the children's home learning activities; we have been using Purple Mash and have since supplemented this with a weekly class timetable containing links to learning resources. As a result of DfE funding we have decided to implement Microsoft Teams to supplement our remote learning provision. The infrastructure changes began in December and we have begun using Microsoft Teams with staff for staff meetings and staff training which has reduced the need to have too many adults in one room.

Our progress with rolling out pupils Microsoft Teams has been in the hands of a third party but we are now in the process of developing the use of Teams with pupils. The changeover was completed just before half term and we had hoped to get all the necessary information out then. However, the premature school closure due to COVID19 meant that this delayed progress even further

Microsoft Teams, as time progresses, will be central point for parents and children to access learning tasks should they need to do so away from school. Activities can be organised into clearly labelled folders and it is easy to navigate. It also has facilities that allow pupils and teachers to keep in contact and discuss their learning with each other as well as providing children with feedback on the work they have completed. In the meantime, we will continue with our mixed approach of purple mash and remote learning timetable on our website as this is what everyone is familiar with, especially as we will return with all pupils from 8th March.

You will soon receive your child's username and password. To join Microsoft Teams, your child will need access to a phone, tablet, computer or other device with internet access. If you are accessing it on your phone or tablet, you may find it easier download the free app first. You will need to add @downs.kent.sch.uk to the username that is provided to access from home.

Full instructions how to set up and access your child's account can be found on the attached document. To get used to using the platform, each class teacher has set their first, very simple online assignment. We



would appreciate it if, over the next week you could support your child in setting up their account and then finding and handing in their first assignment. We are still ironing out a few technical issues (with videos) but other links should be accessible.

There is much debate at the moment around the usage of live lessons versus recorded lessons. At the moment our remote learning plans are supported by links to reputable and high quality recorded lessons, such as Oak National Academy.

We believe that, in the main, recorded material is most suitable for primary aged pupils as this allows our pupils to access the material at their own pace, rewind to key bits of information and watch the recording as many times as they need to understand key concepts. This assertion is backed up though the findings in the EEF study <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog-live-teaching-and-pre-recorded-video-lessons-what-does-the-evidence-say/>

There are some important considerations when thinking about using live lessons or live contact. We have to ensure that all possible safeguarding mitigations are in place, both in school and the children's homes, to protect both the children and the staff. Also, and perhaps most importantly, we recognise the strain and limitations that some of you will have at home in accessing any live contact. Considerations that we need to take are: access to suitable IT equipment at home (although now we have discovered that Xboxes and Play Stations can be utilised), enough bandwidth from the broadband or 4G provider to access live broadcasts especially in families where there is multiple use, the timing of live contact to fit in with busy schedules that parents may already have who are working from home or those that have more than one child learning at home.

We have been receiving lots of feedback from parents and carers, the vast majority of which I am very pleased to report is very positive indeed. We recognise that there is currently a wide spectrum of thought on this subject ranging from some families feeling completely overwhelmed with the amount of work being set to those who would like live lessons. When planning how we will continue to approach remote learning we will always take into account this range of views as well as considering the limitations that most of us are likely to experience. Each lockdown has meant adapting how we teach and what we offer now compared to last March is significantly different, and will look different again should there be other lockdowns in the future.

We understand completely that every family has differing circumstances and online access might be challenging. Whilst we are getting to grips with this new way of providing work, we will continue to provide alternative teaching resources for children to complete where necessary.

Please be assured that all our staff are working incredibly hard at the moment providing both on site and remote education against the backdrop of the worst national health crisis this country has experienced. This is a difficult time for us all and your patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your continued support.

Miss T Leighton
Headteacher

