



Highwood Primary School,
Fairwater Drive,
Woodley,
READING,
Berkshire.
RG5 3JE

Tel: 0118 926 5493

Email: admin@highwood.wokingham.sch.uk
www.highwood.wokingham.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Mr M Hickey BA(Ed), PE QTS

08/01/2021

Re: Highwood Curriculum Offer

Dear Parents / Carers,

Apologies for the length of this communication, but please take the time to read it through to the end. The main reason for writing in such detail is to make all parents aware of the rationale for the approach we have taken with our curriculum offer during the recent lockdown. Through phone conversations that have taken place across the whole school yesterday and today, there have been a few queries about 'live lessons' and some parental requests for an increased number of worksheets to be available. I want to address all these things together to put some context to the decisions we have made.

With all the decision making during the pandemic, there is a legal framework that these decisions are based upon – we then apply this to the individual circumstances of Highwood. In relation to the curriculum expectations, the **Department for Education** have set guidelines for schools when approaching Remote Education – Updated on Thursday 7th January 2021. They state:

When teaching pupils remotely, we expect schools to:

- set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects
- provide teaching that is equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. This will include both recorded or live direct teaching time and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently, and will be as a minimum:
- Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children
- Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day
- Online video lessons do not necessarily need to be recorded by teaching staff at the school: Oak National Academy lessons, for example, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content.
- providing frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources
- providing opportunities for interactivity, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion
- providing scaffolded practice and opportunities to apply new knowledge
- enabling pupils to receive timely and frequent feedback on how to progress, using digitally-facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate
- using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' needs and addresses any critical gaps in pupils' knowledge
- avoiding an over-reliance on long-term projects or internet research activities

Highwood's Curriculum Approach

As you know, we have designed our curriculum under a series of Key Questions that link each subject across each term and link concepts across multiple year groups. To limit any negative impact on future years, we are continuing our curriculum approach during lockdown by using our existing curriculum planning for both pupil's learning in school and at home. This gives both **meaningful and ambitious** work to children each day of an **equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school**. We are setting a piece of English, Maths and Topic work each day,

each with an expected time frame of one hour totalling **3 hours a day, on average, across the school cohort**. In Key Stage 2, there is a daily expectation of reading, physical activity and times tables which will meet the **4 hour a day** expectation.

We are using technology in the form of Microsoft Teams to host the work we provide. Activities will have a pre-recorded video linked to it which include **clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher** that the children are familiar with. On Teams, we have a **system for checking** that children are completing the work set at home and also mechanism for giving **timely and frequent feedback**. We are using our support staff to make phone calls each week to **gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum** and offer support with addressing **any critical gaps in pupils' knowledge**.

By having pre-recorded videos, children (and parents) have the ability to pause, rewind and repeat explanation of the teacher at a time of the day that suits each family's own circumstances. Parents also have direct access through year group emails to **providing opportunities for interactivity, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion**. We are discussing how else to facilitate this with children with more than just a chat room forum.

To add more specific clarity around the decision to not have 'Live Lessons' as a key feature of our approach:

- Many parents are still working from home during the pandemic. Giving parents the ability to juggle their children's learning time around their working time is a key element of flexibility I want parents to have. Live lessons, by definition, have a set start time that may not always be convenient for families, including those families that have more than one child where start times may clash.
- As mentioned above, many families have more than one child and sharing a device either with parents or siblings – having a live lesson at a set time of day may not be possible for all children to attend and could add significant anxiety into households at an already challenging time.
- Some children do not have any electronic device or use of the internet to access the remote learning and I want our approach to be as inclusive as possible. (Please read the email sent today about the Laptop Scheme for further details.)
- We do plan to use Microsoft Teams to engage with the children by reading them stories and having assemblies etc. This will be communicated with parents and 'Meeting Invites' sent through the Microsoft Teams software. These can be accessed via installing Microsoft Teams on mobile phones as there is no specific pupil interaction required – they can simply listen to the story being read by a school adult.

We are trying to move to as much electronic communication of the learning activities as possible by sending learning through Microsoft Teams and email. We will endeavour to provide paper copies for families that do not have any way of accessing the materials, but as you can imagine the cost of photocopying and posting out thousands of pieces of paper will have significant costs attached to it. The use of Microsoft Teams allows you to complete the activities electronically and submit the work without the need for any printing or postage. If you cannot submit directly through Microsoft Teams, then it is possible to upload a photograph of work that is completed. **There is an expectation that all work set is completed by the children and this will be monitored by the class teacher and parents will be contacted if engagement with the activities is a concern.**

I would make a plea to parents to think carefully about this when asking for paper-based materials, so that we can concentrate our finite resources where they are needed most.

For those parents who would like additional activities to the ones we are providing. The school continues to have access to resources to support learning and we are looking to produce video guides as to how parents can use them with their children.

There are still the national resources available:

Oak Academy - <https://www.thenational.academy/>

BBC - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/live-lessons>

We still plan to use class Twitter feeds for additional activities that the whole school can take part in. (Parents do not need to have a Twitter account; the Twitter feeds can be viewed on the school class pages on the website.)

Due to it not being safe to have parents collect books from school, we are also looking at a number of different website subscriptions to allow children's access to more reading materials from home – the free access to Oxford Reading Tree materials are still available on their website as we signposted you towards during the first lockdown. I will keep you updated with our progress.

Our laptop prioritisation is complete and parents will be contacted directly. I will publish the full criteria for parents next week so that you can see how these decisions were made.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hickey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "M" at the beginning.

Matt Hickey
Headteacher