



Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents/carers,

I hope this finds you all well at the end of another very strange week of events both nationally and globally. Thank you for your support and understanding whilst we have settled into yet another new routine. Whilst we would obviously prefer to have all of the children in school, we understand that this is now vital in reducing the number of contacts we all have in order to reduce the transmission of the virus. We have seen an increase in the number of family members testing positive this week and wish all those who are ill a speedy recovery. Thankfully we have not had to close any class bubbles! We did however today see most of our site staff having to isolate due to a positive contact which has meant we are now covering cleaning and caretaking duties in addition to our own roles once again. (Luckily we love a good challenge 😊) I have to say a huge thank you to all our staff who have worked incredibly hard all week to ensure everything is in place for your children. As you can imagine we have had high volumes of emails and phone calls so please bear with us if you have not had a response as yet.

As promised, to support those of you with children learning at home, we have set out some information below which we hope will help to support you with home learning. After reading this, if you still have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### **First things first...**

Many of you will be taking on the role of Teacher whilst simultaneously managing working from home and/or caring for younger siblings. Please be kind to yourselves. You can only do what you can do. Your child will benefit more from little and often whilst you manage to keep the atmosphere in the home calm and happy as opposed to trying to do it all and ending up frazzled and short tempered.

As in the first lockdown I want to emphasise that what is most important right now is that you are all safe and well and that your children feel safe and cared for. They are still very young and have lots of time to catch up with any lost learning. When children returned to school after the last lockdown, our assessment showed that the majority of children were broadly in line with normal expectations.

We have worked hard to learn from the experience of the first lockdown and feedback from parents/carers about what they found useful and what was challenging. We have taken this on board and have addressed this by:

- Providing weekly plans in a common format across all year groups.
- Providing a daily timetable of lessons rather than a list of ideas.
- Being very explicit about what the children need to learn.
- Providing a lesson input followed by a task and resources where appropriate.
- Planning more opportunities for children at home to connect with their Class Teacher.

Even though we only supplied interim home learning this week which is still not quite fulfilling all our aims I am really pleased that we have had many messages from parents/carers saying how effective it has been. We will be refining and improving as quickly as we are able.

## How much time should my child spend on home learning?

- We are basing our planning on the national expectations for home learning which were updated yesterday. In the infant school age range this is *'3 hours a day on average across the cohort, with less for younger children.'* We would therefore expect that our FS2 and Year One children spend less time than this on home learning each day.

## How is the school day usually structured when children are in school?

Each year group team is currently preparing an example of a 'typical' school day which will be uploaded onto the home learning pages of the website next week. Here are a few general points:

- When in school children do not spend the whole of the school day engaged in focused learning tasks, nor are they being directly taught for the whole day.
- The day is broken up into short periods of focused learning tasks interspersed with independent learning activities, outdoor play, physical activity, lunch etc.
- Short bursts of whole class or small group Teacher modelling, explanation and questioning are followed by short focused tasks. Some tasks will be supported/guided by the Teacher; others will be carried out independently.
- Our curriculum is designed around how young children learn best, which is in short bursts. This is because:
  - Young children are only able to concentrate for short periods of time.

Age	Average concentration span
4	8 – 20 mins
5	10 - 25 mins
6	12 - 30 mins
7	14 - 35 mins

- Time needs to be allowed for new learning to be processed and stored in the memory whilst taking a break.
- Young children learn best when tasks are practical.
- Children need to practise and embed learning by applying it in play or other contexts.
- Children need physical activity outdoors to support their development. (Physical and emotional health are necessary for effective learning to take place.)

## Where do I begin?

Start with your routine. What will work for your family? In times like these, it's very easy to change the routines, change your general rules about screen time, bedtime, bath time, wake time, snacks or whatever else. It will help if you:

- Keep a similar schedule from day-to-day and make sure your child gets dressed.
- Set a wake-up time, a time for lunch, screen time and bedtime.

- If you can, try to mimic your child's school day by having periods of time during which certain activities will take place. This will help reduce stress and uncertainty.
- **Read books with your child.** It's not only fun, but reading together strengthens your bond with your child AND helps their development.
- **Make time for active play.** Bring out the blocks, balls, jump ropes and buckets and let the creativity go. Play games that kids of all ages can play, like tag or duck, duck, goose. Let your kids make up new games. Encourage older children to make up a workout or dance to keep them moving.
- **Keep an eye on media time.** Whenever possible, play video games or go online with your child keeping that time structured and limited. If kids are missing their school friends or other family, try video chats to stay in touch.
- **Have fun.** Make one activity a day their fun choice so it could be baking, playing a game with you, making a model together, dressing up, planting seeds, having a teddy bears picnic in the lounge, blowing bubbles or making a den in their bedroom. You could make a jar together and they could fill it with suggestions of activities they would like to do with you in the house and garden.

### How do I structure learning?


Using the weekly learning plans create a weekly learning timetable **that works for you as a family**. For example, you might prefer to do some lessons at the weekend, block all the learning into the mornings or spread the learning across the whole day.

- **Be aware** that most children work most effectively on focused tasks in the mornings.
- **At school** we try to focus on basic skills such as phonics, maths and writing in the morning and more practical subjects such as science and art in the afternoon.
- **Regular breaks.** On your timetable make it one short activity and then have a snack or a physical break just as they would at school.
- **Pick your battles.** If they struggle with an activity do some of it with them so it doesn't become a battleground. Make it sound fun and interesting.

### How will I know what work my child should be doing?

- A weekly learning plan will be uploaded onto our website every Friday. You can find the plans by following this link <https://www.westbridgfordinfants.co.uk/home-learning->

[page/](#) then click on your child's year group. The weekly plans will also be uploaded to your child's Microsoft Teams.

- We have a standard learning plan template across all year groups.
- In FS2 children are set daily Phonics, Maths, Fine motor and Wider Curriculum tasks along with story time.
- In Year One and Two children are set daily Phonics, Maths, English and Wider Curriculum tasks along with story time.
- Each week some tasks will be marked with a . These are key tasks that we would like the children to complete and upload. We will then respond to the work your child has done.

### **What will lessons look like?**

- There will be a learning intention. This is specifically what your child will learn in this lesson.
- Each lesson will comprise of a recorded session for your child to watch. This will either be a session recorded by one of our Teachers or a link to one of the national home learning lessons recommended by the DfE such as Oak National Academy or White Rose Maths.
- This will be followed by a task for your child to complete to apply their learning. Your child may be able to complete some or all of the task by themselves. In school children generally need support to stay focused or to remind them how to be successful in the task. For example, "How are you getting on?" "What do you need to do next?" "What was the next word in your sentence?" "Sound that word out for me."

### **Will there be live lessons?**

- In line with most other infant schools we will not be delivering live lessons as such. (See next question.) This is for a number of reasons:
  - Trials of live lessons with whole classes or large groups of infant children have shown them to be very ineffective.
  - We do not have enough staff to provide live lessons in the more effective very small groups some of you may have experienced with extra-curricular clubs such as language tuition.

- Families with children in more than one year group and more than one school may not have enough devices for all children to access live lessons at the same time. Recorded lessons allow them to share devices in a way that works for them.
- It would be impossible to timetable live lessons to accommodate children in up to 3 different schools (WBIS, WBJs, WBA).
- Recorded lessons give parents/carers the flexibility to plan learning timetables for their children around other children and work commitments.
- All our staff are fully deployed teaching critical worker children during the school day.
- Experience across schools has shown that due to the significant increase in demand on broadband connections, time can be wasted on large groups of children trying to connect.

### **How will you ensure my child feels connected to their class and Teachers?**

Having said that we will not be delivering live lessons, we have reflected on feedback from parents/carers during the last lockdown. One of the things children found hardest was the lack of live interactions with their Teachers. We have addressed this in the following way:

- Each class Teacher will deliver live timetabled story time sessions each week on Microsoft Teams. This will be an opportunity for children at home to see their friends on line and those in school, to share a story with their class community and chat about how they are getting on.
- These will be added to the weekly timetables.

### **What if we can't access online learning?**

- We asked parents/carers to complete a questionnaire last term about access to devices and the internet. We are contacting families who may need support.
- As in the previous lockdown you may find that there are times when high demand for the internet makes connection difficult. If this happens when your child is learning on line you could switch to one of the more practical continuous provision activities or one of the other tasks which doesn't require this.
- We are very happy to print out resources if you are unable to do this at home, just contact school.

- If you have a technical issue with Purple Mash or Teams ... we will do our best to advise and support you and hopefully resolve the issue, but be aware we do not have a full time IT technician.

## How/where do I upload my child's work for the Teacher?

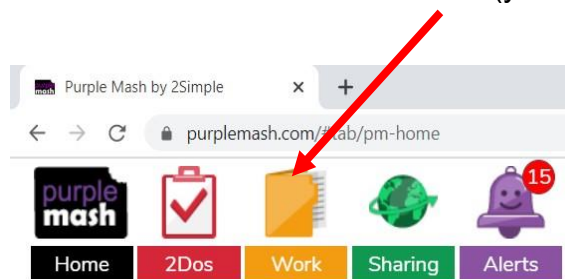
- Children's work should be uploaded onto Purple Mash

### How to up-load Pictures and Documents to Purple Mash January 2021

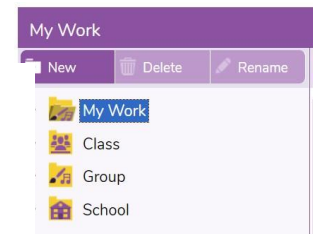
When your child has completed a home learning task, here is how they will share it with their teacher/s and receive feedback.

Please follow the instructions below:

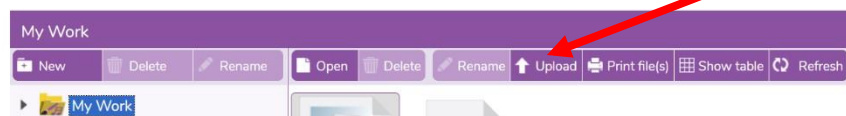
1. Take a photo of their learning and save it on your computer or phone/tablet in a place where you can easily find it. (You can also upload a document with this same process).
2. Login to Purple Mash and click on the 'Work' icon (yellow folder) on the main menu.



3. Click on the 'My Work' file. This will make sure that their work is saved in your child's personal file.



4. You will be able to see the files in their work file in the main section of the page. Above this section click on the 'Upload' icon



5. You then need to find the document/photo that you would like to upload from your computer/phone or tablet.
6. Select the file and upload it to Purple Mash. It will now appear in your work folder and will be visible to you and their teacher/s.

## How will the Teacher respond to my child's work?

The Teachers will view and assess your child's uploaded work in the same way they would in school.

They will use this to inform planning for the next weeks.

They will respond to the ★ tasks with either a written comment or recorded message, praising your child for their achievements

## Do you have any advice for managing my child's behaviour?

- Work with your child to draw up some simple rules and expectations for this time.
- Draw them up as a family so they feel involved.
- Go for the **positive** and link them to your reward chart. (This way the words children hear are the behaviours you want not those you don't want. E.g. **Listen** carefully, rather than don't **talk**.)
- Display them. Your child could design the poster themselves.
- Be consistent and fair. Make sure you give warnings and choices. 'Do your writing with my posh pencil or your pencil.' 'When the clock says 7pm the television will go off.'



You might like to use our school rules as a starting point



## Rewards

Introduce a reward scheme so that you are rewarding positive behaviours. Give your child a tick/star/sticker on the chart every time they do the right thing (saying thank you, completing a piece of work, helping their little sister etc) so that after 10 ticks they get a little reward.

Make these rewards small such as choosing what's for tea, choosing the TV programme at 5pm, a sticker, time with you, a favourite story, or save rewards for something bigger. Print a chart from [templatelab.com/reward-charts](http://templatelab.com/reward-charts) or [www.101printable.com-reward-charts-for-kids](http://www.101printable.com-reward-charts-for-kids) or make your own.



## Reducing anxiety

- **Filter information and give simple reassurance.** Remind children that researchers and doctors are learning as much as they can, as quickly as they can, about the virus and are taking steps to keep everyone safe.
- **Give them control.** It's also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help – washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, and getting enough sleep.
- **Stick to routines.** Children may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.
- **Monitor their media.** Keep young children away from frightening images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. For older children, talk together about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation.
- **Mindfulness.** Try some of the free activities on [smilingminds.au](http://smilingminds.au) or practise simple breathing exercises or squeezes e.g. [childhood101.com/fun-breathing-exercises-for-kids](http://childhood101.com/fun-breathing-exercises-for-kids), **Cosmic Kids** on You Tube or Moovee Calming Breathing and Relaxation



## If it goes wrong

- **Give yourself a moment.** Controlling the way you act, when you feel like you are at breaking point, is important for you and your children. When you notice an emotional response in yourself do something to take the edge off. Have a cup of tea, go for a walk, play music, have some chocolate, run a bath etc. Model a calm response. Your child will learn from you.
- **Think positive.** Instead of getting too stressed about your child's bad behaviour, look out for and reward their good behaviour.
- **Laugh.** Humour can take the heat out of a situation and can even make everyone forget about what's made them angry. Try to see the funny side of things if you can.
- **Use distraction.** Fetch a new game or offer a snack to change the mood.
- **Strike when the iron is cold.** Unless your child is unsafe, wait until you are both calm before dealing with an incident. Giving them a snack and drink first often helps.

## Keeping positive

- Praise is always better than criticism. Try "You are so good at tidying away. Can you put the Lego in the box before I make your drink?"
- Use 'when and then.' "When you are dressed, then you can get a snack."
- Tell them calmly and clearly exactly what you want them to do. "Bottom on the chair, book on the table. Thank you." (Thank you indicates you expect this. Saying please suggests it's optional.)
- Give them some 'take up time' and repeat using the same words.
- Praise specifically. "I like the way you kept going even when you found it tricky."

**Finally, try and enjoy some precious family time with your child.**

**YOU ARE DOING A GREAT JOB!**

Kind regards



Fiona Stevens

Head Teacher