Wednesday 6th January 2021

Dear Parents,

I have received some emails concerning our decision not to offer live video lessons as part of our remote learning at Elburton Primary School. This is something the team have considered at length; I am writing to explain the rationale behind the decision to not offer live lessons at this time.

**The classroom experience cannot be replicated by a live video lesson**

Methods of teaching have changed significantly over the last 20 years and those strategies which have been researched as being highly effective cannot be utilised via video. The model that some of us as parents are used to, of teaching and learning of the teacher talking to us and “telling” us information also does not match our research driven approach to teaching and learning at our school. (For example, the Education Endowment Foundation, states that “Collaborative Learning” is a highly effective teaching and learning strategy which cannot be easily replicated in live video lessons.) The National Education Union (NEU) stated, “online lessons are not desirable for primary children as the teacher-pupil interaction is not easily replicated.”

**Pressure on parents and children through the pandemic**

We are very aware that many parents and children are finding this situation very stressful and we do not want to put any pressure on families to engage at any particular time of day and feel pressured to undertake a certain amount or type of home learning. Families need to find a way that works for them and their situation through this pandemic without any additional stress. We did consider that live video lessons might be easier for some parents, instead of working with their children, however this is not always the case!

**Safeguarding concerns**

Safeguarding must be the focus for all of our decisions and I have first-hand experience of some significant safeguarding situations. I must always consider the risks of live videoing directly into a child’s home and also who may be viewing the live stream at the other end of the computer. Due to personal and private circumstances, some children will not be able to take part in live lessons and would therefore not have access to this learning.

**Engagement and access for all**

Some children do not have access to high quality internet or an appropriate device to access live video lessons. Also, some children do not engage with video lessons and therefore would not gain from this experience. We sadly cannot afford as a school to provide internet hubs and devices to all those children in need. The Government laptops scheme is very selective and would not cover many of our families who would need support. We have 426 children at Elburton Primary School and were only provided with 2 laptops to give to children who needed them on the first round of allocation. In addition to this, some larger families may only have one device, if a live maths video was shared by all classes at 9am for example, this would put pressure on parents and children with regards to who accesses their video each day. Previous feedback from parents has stated that the videos are sometimes viewed more than once for clarity, and repetition. The nature of a video that has been uploaded rather that live gives children and parents this opportunity. We pride ourselves in ensuring all families can access the education we provide, which is why we are continuing to print learning packs if children cannot access the learning online.

**Teachers role through this pandemic**

Our staff have been working extremely hard and coping amazingly well through this pandemic. As well as setting up remote learning for our children, the staff are currently working in school. We have 150 children registered to come into school each day. The teaching staff are required to teach these children at the same time as leading and responding to learning for the children at home. The requirement for staff to teach a class and lead a live session at the same time is simply impossible unfortunately. The staff at Elburton School are also supporting many families who face significant challenges during lockdown. This includes regularly checking, phoning and supporting some families. Staff have been helping me plan for the Government’s new demands which are usually released with very short notice. And, for many they have had their own children at home, so they have been parents as well. Some also have had to cope with other personal situations that have been caused by the pandemic and some have been supporting members of families and friends who are extremely clinically vulnerable. Therefore, for some teachers it is not practical or sustainable to be leading live video lessons and I have a duty of care to them as well as the wider community.

**Best practice regarding home learning**

The Education Endowment Fund recently conducted work examining the existing research to support remote learning of pupils. One of the key findings of their report states that “Teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered.” Most educators have been focusing on Home Learning that has reinforced the children’s previous learning so they can build on this foundation once school resumes. In order to offer variety, we will offer balance with some lessons being videoed ‘as live’ by our teachers so that children still see their teachers. Each morning from next week a video will be shared by a member of the teaching team to set up the day and to address any misconceptions from the previous day. White Rose teaching videos are being used for the delivery of maths lessons, at least one lesson a day will be recorded as live by the children’s class teachers, some lessons will require the PDF worksheets that will be uploaded and finally some lessons will be using the National Oak Academy website. We believe this offers high quality variety for our children, covering a range of learning styles and is accessible for all.

**Will my child get to interact ‘live’ with their year group?**

Despite my reservations regarding the quality of learning provided with a live lesson, I agree that keeping a sense of community for our children is important. Taking the restrictions above into consideration I am discussing with staff the possibility of year group assemblies which could be live on a platform such as Teams. My initial thoughts are that these would be timetabled so that year groups do not clash, meaning that children of one family sharing a device would still be able to access this. During this assembly, the teacher can share successes of the week. The children at home will be able to interact with those in school. We will be in contact with these arrangements in the near future.

I hope this reassures you that all of the decisions that have been taken with regards to your child’s remote learning have been done so with due consideration. As always, your child’s well-being and learning is at the centre of our approach to the delivery of education. I understand that home schooling is a challenging job, on top of workload and other external pressures at the moment. Should you require further advice or support, we are here to help. Please contact your child’s class teacher.

Kind regards,

Mr K Smithers

Acting Headteacher