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A very different beginning of Summer Term message!

27 April 2020

Dear Parents, Carers but most importantly children

The 'unknown territory' referenced in my previous letter continues to roll out across our country. Schools all over the UK are adapting as quickly as they can to the changed profile of 'teaching and learning'. We all watch and wait and listen to the Politicians about how the country is progressing, the message is very clear, we have to be patient and continue to adjust as best we can during this time of challenge.

We truly hope this letter finds you safe and well and that you are looking after each other, making sure each and every one of you are getting the right balance of 'learning' and relaxation time. We all know that education and school is important, but our safety, mental health and well-being, 'Golden Threads' running through everything our school stands for, is absolutely vital during these unprecedented times.

All of us, young and old need to be mindful of our feelings and anxieties during this time and talk about them – don't 'bottle it up' even if you find you are saying the same things over and over it REALLY does not matter. Much better out and shared than kept inside. Remember that great book, 'The Huge Bag of Worries', very relevant at the moment for us all. Don't forget, there is ALWAYS someone here at school to talk to.



We hope you are managing to begin to get back in to the routines of the day after the Easter Break, just as if you are still coming into school. This is really important and as a reminder for you, our schedule is available on the 'Home Learning Platform' on the Website to help you with this. It is time to re-set; refresh the learning space/s; put the routines back in place; enjoy and immerse yourself in the brilliant challenges set by your teachers. Do it, but do it with some caution...

Our children are still just as scared as we are right now. They have been hearing everything that has been going on around them over the past 4 weeks plus with more to come. They will have unanswered questions, questions which even we as grownups will not be able to answer. Like us, this is a new and unprecedented experience which we are all learning to cope with as best we can.

As we go into the 6th week of lockdown, with no real ideas as yet about when schools will be able to open their doors again, it is quite likely that the reality of not being with friends, being in school, seeing your teachers is really setting in. I am sure you will at times be finding learning tricky and also perhaps not always willing to take advice from parents/carers. Don't worry about this, take a break from what you are doing and come back to it refreshed and remember, this is not going to be forever.

Help your child/children to feel like it's all going to be ok, there are lots of resources in our Home Learning Site that can support you with this. Please try not to be too anxious about the academic aspects of your child's development. Their brains are pretty full right now with trying to work all this out!! That will be taking up a lot of head space. So continue with a more balanced and flexible schedule which helps to develop and maintain well-being.

Strengthen the skills your children need in order to thrive when they come back to school. Students who are good readers tend to do better than other children. Time spent learning how to find things out, problem solving, and focusing on one task for longer periods of time will give children a 'leg up' when they return.

Probably the biggest complaint we hear from older children is that they do not see how the things we ask them to learn have any relevance in their own lives. They say, when will I ever need to read and evaluate another poem, why will I need algebra, and why do I need to know the date when Henry VIII married each of his wives!! You can show your children that much of what they study can be applied in the real world (maybe not the Henry VIII thing). Children might even have a little fun learning something new during this challenging and confusing time.



Here are a few ideas to try at home:

1. Read, read, read

If you do nothing else but read to young children—or set aside time for older children to read on their own and then talk to them about what they have read, that will be more valuable than attempting to teach almost anything else.

Children who had someone read to them when they were little are more likely to read for pleasure. And if they read for pleasure, they do much better in school in all subject areas.

Children who read novels have much higher emotional intelligence, which helps them cope with stress, make friends more easily, and learn from mistakes.

Children who read well can sit still longer and concentrate on a single task for more time than their peers.

Parents of young children could ask the grandparents to read a book aloud over FaceTime or Zoom. There is also a huge list of [children's audiobooks](#) that Audible has made available for free during the pandemic.

It has also been found that turning on the subtitles on your TV will also encourage children to read them, and, improves reading ages significantly.

2. Teach family history

What was the world like for my ancestors? You don't have to teach from a history book at home. Get older relatives to talk to the children about their life experiences. We have a lot of visitors come into school to talk about the things they have experienced in their lives. The children are always interested, excited, motivated and moved by the experience. They could create a family tree based on the information they get from family members.

Some children have had challenging experiences, particularly if they have been migrants. Helping these children to write the story is always interesting and can be therapeutic. I would love to read the stories either by e mailing them or bringing them in when school opens. You know, in the past family traditions and histories were passed from one generation to another through stories.

4. Write your own History

Make a record of some type about what it was like for you and your family during 'The Lock Down – 2020'. It could be; A Factual Story, A Poem, A Diary, A Painting, A set of drawings, A sketch book, A Scrap Book, A news account/paper.



5. Make maths and science interesting

Teach addition/subtraction of amounts EYFS/KS1, fractions KS2, by increasing a recipe by one-third, or converting a recipe for 6 to a recipe for 2 or 3.

Do simple science experiments like changing the amount/ratio of squash to water and test on different family members to find the one they like best.

Take seeds from fruit and vegetables, the tops of onions and carrots, and plant them all. Water and care for them equally and see what grows. Keep track of your experiment on a chart, then the children can use linear algebra to predict how big the plants will get based on the data they've collected.

Please don't be hard on yourselves. Most children have access to some sort of technology that gives them access to the sum total of all human knowledge. If you send me back a child who had fun learning, or one who has learnt a new skill, or, who can concentrate, a little longer than before — then you will have done something very profound and important.

What our children need most of all right now, is to feel safe, comforted and loved. Please don't worry about them 'falling behind' they will have gained so many new skills during this time which will be needed in the days ahead. We will meet them where they are.

So, if we can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of this pandemic, your child's/children's mental health will be more important than their academic skills. How they have felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is long gone. Keep that in mind, every single day.

Keep safe, keep well, we miss you and look forward to seeing you on your return to our school. What a celebration that will be.

Yours sincerely

Theresa O'Hara

Mrs Theresa O'Hara and all the staff and Governors at Pearl Hyde

