



St Leonard's C.E. Primary School

"Nurturing Faith and Inspiring Success"

Southwark Diocesan
Board of Education
Multi-Academy Trust



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Headteacher: Mr Simon Jackson BAQTS (Hons) NPQH
Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Laura Akhtar BA(Hons) PGCE

22nd January 2021

"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."
Arthur Ashe

Dear Parent / Carer,

Whatever our personal circumstances, the above quote offers very calm and simple advice for us all to reflect upon. At this time, we need *empathy* to guide our thinking and our actions. In that spirit, I sincerely wish to thank all within our community for everything that you are doing to try and manage in these most challenging of circumstances, especially as I'm away from St Leonard's for a lot of the time each week. I would also particularly like to thank the many of you who have expressed your appreciation for the efforts of all the staff and your child's teacher in particular.

Home Learning

For those parents whose children remain at home, I can understand any anxiety, frustration and unhappiness you may be feeling. You all have other pressures to be dealing with, and as time passes with little hope of imminent change, I can appreciate that your ability to empathise with school-based pressures is going to be increasingly tested.

It is only natural that the parents of those children engaging in remote learning want this provision to operate smoothly and be of high quality; we do too - and staff are doing their utmost to meet their own high expectations as well as yours.

I am aware that some of you were upset by a rearranged *Google Meet* in one class and, whilst this was done in order to split the number of children involved so that they could have a greater opportunity to participate, I recognise that it would have been helpful if this factor had been realised earlier. As such, I am very happy to apologise to anyone inconvenienced by this situation.

Regarding the provision itself, we know that 88% of our children are either accessing learning in school or online, which is very pleasing. We also are well aware that the other 12% may be accessing learning in a different way of their parents' choosing.



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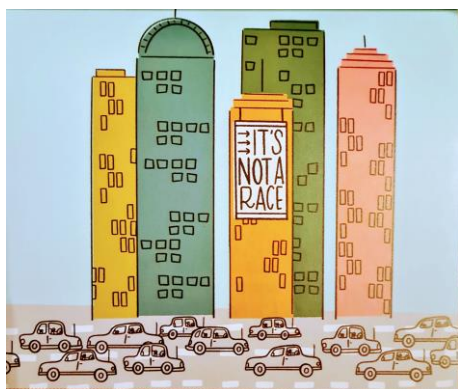


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Moving forward

It is important to reflect on how far we've come since receiving feedback from the first lockdown. As you know, we are working with *Google Classroom*. This is an area though where I must ask you to empathise with us. Teaching staff have had some initial training and are supporting each other on what is a very steep learning curve. Whilst many excellent lessons have been created, we are not pretending that, in just a couple of months, we've mastered



online teaching or that we cannot become more efficient and effective in our use of technology. However, you need to know that staff are dedicating huge amounts of time and effort into getting to grips with this provision and it would be deeply unfair and unhelpful to judge teachers negatively for this. People comparing provision between schools is a particularly invalid exercise. Judging the output without knowing the context or the capacity of a school's community serves no purpose.

Think back to when your first child was just a few months old. Would it have been helpful if someone expressed an opinion that another new parent of an infant was coping much better than you? Just as every parent's context is different, so it is for every school. It is not a race.

Emerging Truths

With any new venture, as time passes we become aware of the impact it can have on a community. *Google Classroom* has huge potential for the future, but the time to explore this properly is when conditions are much calmer and, dare I say it – normal. As such, please do not post negative judgmental comments on the chat facility for all to see. You will have the opportunity to feed back to us about your experience and we will work together to create a provision that meets the needs of everyone. However, my immediate priority is to relieve the pressure on you and upon the staff.

New Protocols

I have impressed upon staff that they need to be acutely aware of the pressure you are facing. As such, it would be unreasonable for us to demand that work is completed and handed in by a certain time every day. Also, if you need a day off from trying to teach your child, take it with my blessing. If your child needs a day off from screen based learning, let them take it. Relationships are more important than any learning activity.



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However, there are two current pressures upon teachers which I must relieve them of. The first is any expectation that every piece of work submitted is to be acknowledged with a comment. This doesn't happen in school and it mustn't happen online. Every child's effort does need to be acknowledged during a week - just not every time.

The other pressure on teachers relates to the hours they are actually logged on to their computer. Until now, teachers have been working through the evenings as people are uploading work at all hours. We accept that this is sometimes the only opportunity that parents may have, so please feel free to do so. However, teachers will not be posting any feedback after 5:00pm on weekdays and not at all at weekends. I learned many years ago that it isn't possible to please everyone and it's possibly the hardest lesson to learn as a head teacher. It doesn't mean that I don't want to. I naturally want satisfied parents – but this mustn't be achieved at the expense of the teachers or members of the school's leadership team. As a body, they are brilliant. They deserve and can rely upon my support.

Finally...

Despite all of the pressure and the different perspectives, we are one Christian community. We all want the same thing – a return to normality for every child. Let us learn together with humility, think upon each other with empathy and look towards each other with grace. Using the words of John Wesley to inspire us, let's:

*Do all the good we can
By all the means we can
In all the ways we can
In all the places we can
At all the times we can
To all the people we can
As long as ever we can.*

Kind regards,

Mr Simon Jackson

Head Teacher



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