

Dear Parents,

As a life-long educator and professional, I have struggled to accept criticism of our on line support at home, as I pride myself on providing the very best education for all the children in my schools. Therefore, I felt it only correct to revisit the schools' decision not to offer 'live lessons'. In order to do this with appropriate rigour I feel it is important to start with the reasons we had for not offering live lessons initially and then consider if anything has significantly changed since then.

The classroom experience cannot be replicated by a live 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 the teacher talking to us and "imparting stuff" also does not match our research driven approach to teaching and learning at our school. (For example, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), states that "Collaborative Learning" is a highly effective teaching and learning strategy which cannot be easily replicated in live lessons.) The National Education Union (NEU) stated, "Online lessons are not desirable for primary children as the teacher-pupil interaction is not easily replicated." <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog-live-teaching-and-pre-recorded-video-lessons/>

Pressure on parents and children through the pandemic

We are very aware that many parents and children are finding lockdown extremely stressful and we do not want to put any additional pressure on families to engage at any particular time and feel pressured to undertake a certain amount or type of home learning. All families need to find a way that works for them, and their situation, through this pandemic without any additional stresses. We have considered whether video lessons might be easier for some parents, instead of working with their children, however this is not always the case. We now have a strong resource bank with The Oak Academy, CBBC, BBC Bitesize and White Rose creating recorded 'video lessons', these have been shared with parents and are often used by teachers to support the children's learning.

Safeguarding concerns

I have been a Headteacher for over 8 years and have therefore been the Designated Safeguard Lead and the Responsible Person for Health and Safety for the schools I have led. Sadly, Safeguarding and Health safety must be the focus for all of our decisions and I have first-hand experience of some significant safeguarding situations. The risks go past that of 'ZOOM bombing'. 'Live lessons' can be a risk to children, families and staff and a source of extra anxiety for some. I also know as a parent, that the actions and words of others on screen can offend and upset others in the live session.

Engagement and Access for All

Many 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 of our children in need – as much as we would like to. We are however, providing where possible. The Government scheme is very selective and does not cover many of our families who would need support. We pride ourselves in ensuring all families can access the education we provide, which is why we have been supporting online learning, printing learning packs where needed, supplying stationary and reading books where possible.

Teachers' role through this pandemic

Our staff have been working really hard and coping amazingly well through this pandemic. They have been creating Home Learning activities, which do not always rely on computers, are interesting for the children (hopefully), give you some choice and also recommending further ways to support your children. They have been replying to emails and the children's work and photos sent in. Many of the staff have been coming into school and working with our Vulnerable and Critical Worker Children and trying to make their experience in school fun

and exciting (as everyone else is at home with their parents.) They have also been supporting many families who have had significant challenges during Lockdown. They have been helping me plan for the Government's frequent demands and requests to schools. Also, for many of our staff, they have their own children at home, so they have been parents just like you. 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 lessons and I have a duty of care to them as well as your children.

Best practice re Home Learning

The NEU, in reference to Home Learning - "Variety is key and bite-sized chunks of work are more likely to be completed and could be part of a bigger project." This makes a lot of sense to give variety and 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. That has been our focus throughout this period. We were also very aware of the possible impact of the lockdown on the children and yourselves, which is why we have also been sharing many Well Being Activities and our staff reading stories on our YouTube Channel. We are providing a breadth to the activities so that it isn't just hours on a screen doing school work. This is not good for our children, especially at a time when most of their leisure and 'downtime' may well be screen based.

So, has anything fundamentally changed since we made the initial decision?

Simply, no, with respect to the 6 areas above. The safeguarding risks are the same but can be appropriately reduced with control measures and procedures. (However, many of these control measures would not be able to be put in place if live video lessons were being carried out more regularly, so the risks would increase and would not be acceptable).

There are now more recorded lessons available to parents. Only a very small number of primary schools across the country are offering this and much is dependent on circumstances and contexts. Not all of it has been successful. Many of our teachers and teaching assistants are coming into school to look after our increased number of Critical Worker and Vulnerable Children. We have higher numbers of children in school for face to face teaching than many other schools. This has meant that much of our resource is shared between online and face to face.

Decision after this review concerning live 'Live Lessons' delivered by staff at our school.

We will not be moving to 'live' lessons at this point. However, staff will provide their own recordings, make direct references to the Oak Academy 'live' lessons and other providers of video lessons within their 'online learning support' for those parents and children to engage in this type of learning. A recent Ofsted report would support this view;

www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education/whats-working-well-in-remote-education

We have not forgotten the children at home and we are making efforts to provide regular engagement with the teachers. We are proud of the variety and menu of learning support that we deliver and teachers are having regular 'live' check-ins with the children. We are constantly reviewing our practices and processes and will keep you informed of any changes.

Please refer to our 'Online Learning Guidance for Parents' booklet which may provide extra support around online learning. Should you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher.

I hope this clarifies why we have made our initial decision and also the outcome of this review concerning 'Video Lessons'.

Best wishes,

Mr Witts and the School Leadership Team and Governors