21st April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Welcome Back!**

Welcome back to a new school term! We hope you and your family have stayed fit and well and enjoyed a nice Easter break from school work (even if nothing else changed much!) We are acutely aware of what a tough time this is for everyone, socially, emotionally, economically and practically, and we want to assure you that we will do our best not to add any more pressure.

As we now know, lockdown (and school closures) will have to continue a little longer yet. Try not to worry, to date, **we have only ‘missed’ 10 school days** (2 weeks was Easter holiday and yesterday would have been an INSET day), and with your on-going support from home we know we can still catch up lost school learning.

Thank you again for your enormous support with ‘home education’ before Easter. I can totally understand how some of you could feel totally overwhelmed by lots of the learning and web-resources provided.  There are so many - which is great from a choice point of view - but **I would suggest finding just a few you like and sticking to them. Please don’t feel you have to use or try them all! We have suggested that you use 2 main sources now - see 1) and 2) below.**

We completely understand, that parents find themselves in various different situations depending on their home/work circumstances.  We are very aware that some of you are already really feeling the pressure as you work from home and try to home-school.  We have asked all the teachers, who are busy planning more learning, to ensure everything that comes home is as clear as it possibly can be, regarding activities, links, timescales etc.

Thank you for everything you are doing at home to support the children’s learning.  We really appreciate the combined efforts of all our parents and know what a brilliant job everyone is doing. Under the Kids Are Tab on the website and then under General Resources, there are examples of daily plans/timetables that parents tell us are working well for those of you who have the time and would like more structured days.  There are a few examples so parents can choose ones that work best for them and the time they have available.

**Where are the more structured learning activities for our children? What should we be focusing on?**

1. You can find the **home learning packs under the ‘kids area’** tab of the website, and then **‘year groups’ tab**. These can be fitted into whatever schedules work for you at home. These are great, and our number one recommended resource, because they are truly what your child needs as they come from Russell.
2. **The Oak National Academy** (backed by the Department of Education) launched yesterday – and we think it is brilliant! We really recommend it for the ‘teaching’ part that the children are missing from face to face contact. The lessons are really easy to use. Once you are in the on-line classroom (see second link below), you simply select ‘subject’, year group and then either English, Foundation (this is Foundation Subjects such as History, Geography etc. combined in a topic NOT Foundation Stage) or Maths and click ‘play’ – a video of a great teacher pops up with an hour lesson. There is a simple plan for the whole week too. <https://www.thenational.academy/> <https://www.thenational.academy/online-classroom>

A BBC Bitesize Daily (no Foundation Stage) also launched yesterday. You may want to try it though as it does offer a wider range of subjects. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons>

**We do not want you to feel that you need to do any more than the Russell home learning packs (with daily reading) – because you don’t!** These other resources are just to look at if you want to.

**Reading at home:**

As you may recall, one of our main pleas was to keep reading ‘going’ over the period of school closure. Below is a great resource to help you if you are running out of books at home:

There are free eBooks on:

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page/>

Parents just need to register with an email.  In terms of recording what has been read, the eBooks can be written in the Reading Diary.  If your child is in Foundation Stage, an observation on Tapestry would be lovely to see but is not necessary for every book.

Mrs Moore has kindly been through the early reading books and matched them to a best fit with our coloured levels.  Each level has 15-20 eBooks available - it’s really good and we recommend it!  This will enable parents to continue with reading at home using different books.

Purple/Silver - Oxford level 1

Silver/orange - Oxford level 1+

Orange/brown - Oxford level: 2

Brown/white - Oxford level: 3

White/yellow - Oxford level: 4

Yellow/pink - Oxford level: 5

Pink/stripy - Oxford level: 6

It’s a free resource and very easy to use.

**A book about Coronavirus designed for children:**

The brilliant Axel Scheffler has produced a book about Covid-19 Coronavirus just for children - and it's available as a FREE download.

<https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus-ABookForChildren.pdf>

The Gruffalo illustrator worked with consultant Professor Graham Medley, two head teachers and a psychologist to make sure the book got the messages right, answering questions about quarantine, how you can catch the virus and what happens if you get ill.

Publishers Nosy Crow have asked for donations in lieu of payment, to go to our fantastic health workers: [www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk/](http://www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk/)

**Consolidating key skills in Maths at home:**

Children in Year 4 use TT Rockstars to practice their tables daily. The children will have a log-in that they use in school to access this app (they are simple and the children should be able to tell you them). You can use the app from home too. Just 10 minutes a day, 4 times a week is recommended.

If you are in a different year group, want to use a website instead, or are having technical/log-on difficulties with the app, then we suggest using: ‘Hit the Button’ in the same way (Times Tables and Number Bonds are particularly helpful, 10 minutes a day, 4 times a week):

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/maths-games/hit-the-button>

Practising these basic maths skills is really important and will benefit your child when they return to school.

**Keeping Active – PE/Physical activity resources:**

If Joe Wicks is wearing thin, try some of these we have been recommended:

School Games Active Championships     <https://www.yourschoolgames.com/coronavirus-support/school-games-active-championships/>

Sportshall Home Pentathlon    <http://www.sportshall.org/homepentathlon>

Imoves Free School Access     <https://www.imoves.com/cv19>

YST - Home Learning Resource   <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/free-home-learning-resources-0>

**With all this on-line learning, where can I go to get support to help keep my child safe?**

There is a lot of support available to keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers:

* The NSPCC have produced [resources for parents about online safety](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDksInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MTcuMjAzMDE4MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5uc3BjYy5vcmcudWsva2VlcGluZy1jaGlsZHJlbi1zYWZlL29ubGluZS1zYWZldHkvIn0.KtOL4YCvRMdhf4SQGUdaMgcGN5Z-KWLJKk-2mjZlLdc/br/77548013046-l)
* [Thinkyouknow](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
* [Internet matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIktuA5LWK2wIVRYXVCh2afg2aEAAYASAAEgIJ5vD_BwE) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [Parent info](https://parentinfo.org/) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [LGfL](https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety/default.aspx) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [Net-aware](https://www.net-aware.org.uk/) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)

**Tips on mental health and well-being and working from home with children:**

We do not pretend that this is an easy time for any of us…far from it! In recognition of this Central Bedfordshire Council have produced two leaflets to help with mental health and well-being and working from home with children. They are **attached** to the email you have received today and are simple, on-page documents if you feel they may help you. In addition, WHO has produced a [poster](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MTcuMjAzMDE4MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy53aG8uaW50L2RvY3MvZGVmYXVsdC1zb3VyY2UvY29yb25hdmlydXNlL2hlbHBpbmctY2hpbGRyZW4tY29wZS13aXRoLXN0cmVzcy1wcmludC5wZGY_c2Z2cnNuPWYzYTA2M2ZmXzIifQ.CiOkmwZrKiHEk4_rt848yhgRrrp3nUPQZOS6aXmw9gE/br/77548013046-l) on helping children cope with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak and The British Psychological Society has produced [advice](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MTcuMjAzMDE4MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5icHMub3JnLnVrL3NpdGVzL3d3dy5icHMub3JnLnVrL2ZpbGVzL1BvbGljeS9Qb2xpY3klMjAtJTIwRmlsZXMvVGFsa2luZyUyMHRvJTIwY2hpbGRyZW4lMjBhYm91dCUyMGNvcm9uYXZpcnVzLnBkZiJ9.1a-zV1Gokrg4RIonMGAMYfBKCLYsxZPy2_OrPxQmxp8/br/77548013046-l) on talking to children about COVID-19.

**And finally…**

It’s definitely been a strange and challenging time for everyone, so it is absolutely normal if you and/or your child feel wobbly and worried at the moment. We want to be here for you every step of the way as we all work this all out together. Please, if you have any concerns about helping your child learn or you need any other support from the school, do let us know by contacting us via all the usual routes:

office@russell-lower.co.uk

send@russell-lower.co.uk

pastoralsupport@russell-lower.co.uk

01525 755664

We miss the children very much, but know we must follow the government’s guidance to keep everyone in our extended community safe. Just because we are not all in the same building, doesn’t mean we cannot have some fun together! Your children will have lots of activities they can get stuck into over the first three weeks of the summer term, so keep a close eye on the Kids Area/Year group pages of the school website and do use the National Academy.

Unfortunately, we cannot say yet when we will be able to open the school fully again, but rest assured that we will continue to do our utmost to keep your child learning and our school community ‘connected’ in the meantime.

Thank you so much for your on-going support at this extremely challenging time for us all.

Take very good care of yourselves and stay safe.

Kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher