

Learning from home: what parents, carers and pupils can expect

1. We are all in a new and difficult situation

No-one anticipated the global crisis caused by the Coronavirus, and 4 weeks ago, no-one could have imagined that the country would be 'locked down', with schools closed to all but a very few children. We are all, parents, teachers and leaders, dealing with the same worries, concerns and anxieties about the situation. At the same time, we are trying to reassure our children and give them some sense of normality by encouraging them to continue with their education and learning at home, for the majority.

2. Working at home

If you are a parent who is also trying to work at home, we understand how difficult this can be, particularly if you are caring for younger children. The advice is to be realistic about how much work you can complete when you are also caring for children at home.

3. Staying safe online

The government have released further guidance for parents regarding keeping children safe online. The information can be found in section 6.3 of the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

4. Learning at home is not the same

We understand that keeping your children safe and well means looking after their mental health as well as their physical health. An increase in stress can make a person more susceptible to viral infections – so it is important we all stay as calm as possible despite the challenges we face. After that, we know that you will want to support your child in continuing to learn as best they can, whilst at home.

Creating a routine is important, with times set aside for learning. Younger children will feel more settled if you can plan out what they will do during the day. But children and young people also need some 'down time'. They will also be feeling anxious about COVID-19, they will be missing their friends, and many of them in Years 6, 11 and 13 will be worried about the next stage of their education given that tests and examinations are cancelled. It makes sense to let them have some relaxation and rest time. Try and assure them about the future – after all, all pupils are in the same situation nationally.

Parents and carers are not expected to be teachers, delivering expert lessons. All our children and young people across all Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust academies have been given access to online work and resources, or paper-based work to complete. There are also many online resources that pupils can access – and we have provided links to these for pupils. We are realistic. Your children are not expected to do schoolwork all day long; if they can complete three hours of good learning, for example, that is fine.

We understand that you may have several children at home, and that access to IT may be limited and need to be shared. It's a good thing to limit screen time, so it doesn't matter if pupils don't have a full day's access to the internet. Try and divide up access time between them.

Instead of worrying that children are not doing enough schoolwork, parents can view the enforced break as an opportunity for some child-led, individualised learning. You could ask your child: let's write down all the different things that you could use this time to learn, do and experience. Then every morning, ask them to put a schedule together, made up of those things.

5. Our teachers are there to support

Our teachers will do their best to continue to provide work for pupils to ensure that learning continues as far as possible. Teachers have worked and are working incredibly hard to prepare and provide online work for pupils to complete at home. But this is much harder and more time consuming than the daily work that they are used to – teaching face to face in the classroom. Students should use the strategies and systems put in by individual academies and teachers will do their best to respond.

Many teachers and leaders are selflessly coming into schools to supervise the pupils who are eligible to attend. They are taking the time to contact families and pupils regularly to make sure that they are safe and well. They are, as usual, going above and beyond. However, Trust and Academy leaders are very clear that teachers, of course, will have their own anxieties, many are self-isolating, some are ill, and many have their own families to manage at the same time. It is not an expectation that teachers provide lesson by lesson work for all students at this time; we simply cannot replicate a school day for pupils working at home. Teachers are doing what they can, and also signposting pupils to online resources that they can use independently. This is an opportunity for pupils to develop more independence in their learning. Reading is always the first and most important activity pupils can do to maintain and improve their skills and knowledge.

We will be working across the Trust to collaborate resources, to provide what we can for pupils going forward and to start planning a curriculum for September that supports all our children and young people to catch up with the learning, knowledge and skills as quickly as possible.

There is NO expectation that any home learning work will be set or completed during the two week Easter break; however, there are some optional activities that each academy has put on their website.

Thank you all for your support during this unprecedented time. We will keep communicating with you on a regular basis – and all hope that we will get back to some kind of normal as soon as possible.

