



College Town Primary School

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Head Teacher Mrs Trudi Sammons MA

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Dear Parents and carers

REMOTE LEARNING

You will all be very aware that recently one of our classes had to self-isolate due to a positive case of COVID19. As a school we had already been working on our remote learning procedures so we were able to respond quickly and implement our class closure procedures. The remote learning showcased in the first two days gained great feedback from parents, which was wonderful, but sadly change was required as it was apparent that the model was not fit for purpose under the DfE's and government's new legal duty law.

The Department for Education (DfE) has published a temporary continuity direction order the coronavirus act 2020, which states all state-funded school age children must be provided "immediate access to remote education" should they miss school due to coronavirus.

The DfE said the direction is "to provide legal certainty for all involved in the education sector" and makes clear "schools have a legal duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children unable to attend school due to coronavirus (Covid-19)".

The direction comes into force on October 22nd 2020 and "will have effect until the end of the current school year, unless it is revoked by a further direction".

It has been recognised by Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, the good work already undertaken by schools when he said: "At every step, school leaders have done what was asked of them, and then gone beyond. This will be perceived as a cynical attempt by government to look strong by acting tough. It will be seen as a slap-in-the-face to school leaders, destroying any good-will remaining, and is likely to live long in the memory of all education professionals."

He added: "By reaching for legal powers the government risks sending an unequivocal message to the profession and parents that they do not trust school leaders to act in the interests of young people in this country."

DfE guidance previously stated it "expects" schools to be able to provide the remote education.

Expectations include; setting meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects, teaching a "planned and well-sequenced curriculum", and gauging how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum.

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The new direction warns “the duty to comply with this direction by a responsible body is enforceable by the secretary of state making an application to the High Court or the county court for an injunction, and any such application may be made without notice being given to the responsible body”.

However, the DfE said taking legal action would be a “last resort” and that the department “will take a proportionate and fair approach to assessing the adequacy of remote education provision”. However, in producing a remote package that meets all of the new requirements in every eventuality we have had to change our thinking to ensure that we meet this new regulation. I have endeavoured to highlight the barriers that as a school we face and hope you can appreciate the challenge in providing such a model.

It became apparent very quickly that the model initially developed was not a model which was achievable or sustainable under new powers enforced by the DFE. Consequently, we have had to spend considerable time re-evaluating our model as a school to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils, parents and our staff in a variety of scenarios. This process revealed so many challenges to all those involved and I felt it important that I share these with you so there is a universal understanding of the rationale behind our policy and practice.

Barriers for staff:

When a class self isolates the teacher will also be working from home. This in itself raises many complications:

- The majority of staff have partners who are already working from home already on the home WIFI. This reduces bandwidth and availability of WIFI.
- Many staff also have children, who in ‘lockdowns’ are also in the home and who now under new DFE/Gov guidance also need to follow their own school’s remote learning policy. Equally, where children are very young they demand their parents attention.
- Where staff have parents, partners and children at home finding a quiet and secure space to work with their children is for many a huge challenge.
- All of the teachers here at CTPS really enjoy the interactions and delivery of lessons in a live arena, but the thought of trying to align the necessary IT to video themselves teaching live is quite daunting and highly stressful. Teachers, in the majority of cases, are not IT wizards nor do they have the necessary hardware to undertake such a role. Therefore our model must be realistic in terms of what teachers can be asked to do under these incredibly stressful times. It also does not take account of them falling ill COVID19 or any other illness. In this event your child/ren would not have remote learning available to them immediately, which under new powers is not legal.
- Primary schools nationally remain open. The delivery of our public service remains unchanged. Everyday staff work in close proximity of hundreds of others people without any PPE. Every other work place has fastidious procedures in place to safeguard their staff, such as working from home, PPE etc. This makes primary schools a ‘high risk’ environment and will undoubtedly see staff becoming ill at some point. Therefore, the model we put forward must be able to provide the pupils with an education even in the absence of their teacher.



- The school's duty of care around data protection and safeguarding means that IT usage has to be strictly controlled, with only devices owned by the school being used by staff.

Barriers for parents:

- The vast majority of our parents will need be working from home if their child is required to self-isolate. This, in reality, will prevent you spending hours supporting your child/ren in their remote learning.
- A suitable area which is quiet for your child/ren to work. We fully appreciate that there may well be younger siblings or other factors which are not conducive in promoting an ideal learning environment.
- Where there are multiple children in the house a parent, despite their best intentions, would not be able to support multiple lessons scheduled at specific times.
- Parents with scheduled meetings are unlikely going to be able to rearrange these to login to attend lengthy live teaching sessions.
- While there may be a laptop/ device within the home there are unlikely going to be enough for two or three children to all login and successfully access their individual lessons at the same time.
- All work places are under strain and potentially requesting additional time allowances to support your child/ren could cause increased stress and pressure between you and your employer.

I hope as a school this detailed evaluation highlights to you all the considerable thought and energy invested into ensuring our model is the best that it can be under these testing and ever changing circumstances.

I totally appreciate that there is only one 'real' ideal, and of course the actual classroom offers the best place to support children's learning. However, I think that over the last six months we all now realise that currently our main focus must be to support each other to stay safe and save lives. We will continue to try our very best to remain open for our families, but where closure is required please support the school's plan in supporting your child/ren.

Yours faithfully

Trudi Sammons



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