



MAIDEN ERLEGH

CHILTERN EDGE

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Dear Parent/Guardian

Strange week

I am writing to you at the end of an incredibly strange week. The week began with about fifteen staff decamping to Maiden Erlegh School in Reading. However, it soon became apparent that we didn't need such a large group of staff and we sent a large number home. The provision for our vulnerable and key worker students has now settled down and we have around 8 students each day who are working really well on their Google Classroom provision along with doing some enrichment work such as tutor reading, Art, Drama or PE.

We have also done a lot to get laptops to many students who need them with Miss Bliss and Mrs Boys doing a delivery run on Monday afternoon to around 15 households for which I am really grateful. We have limited resources but if things are tricky regarding IT most work can be completed on paper with photos of work being uploaded onto Google Classroom as an alternative.

There are some video tutorials to show how to do an upload and submit assignments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcA0Epv8CIk>

and some instructions on doing this from a phone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SvxCccdZn8>

Google Classroom

As I said in the email I wrote to you on Sunday, the provision that we started the week will evolve and it has...

I have been working from home since Wednesday but I am back in the office next week. Like all parents I have been battling with dual responsibilities of work and ensuring my children get enough work done (along with doing Joe Wicks with them every morning at 9am!!). I think what is clear is balancing these two responsibilities isn't easy! I have also received a number of e-mails from parents who have written to express their concern that their children were struggling to complete the amount of work required. Firstly, I want to express our gratitude that so many parents have been so supportive in ensuring that the students have worked so hard this week. The quantity of work and quality of work has been excellent and staff have been really pleased with what they have received (although we have seen a few examples of students Googling topics and then cutting and pasting from Wikipedia- obviously, the tasks haven't been set up in this manner so please encourage your children to follow the instructions that have been given). In addition, there are a few students who haven't done any work and we will be working with those households to ensure that this situation is improved. The big issue is not about getting into trouble but the disadvantage that this period of intellectual inactivity that results for the student. It is our moral imperative that we try and get all students to complete some meaningful work next week.

For all students we will reduce the amount of work we are asking students to complete next week and we are also asking staff to consider the type of work they produce and to ensure that the quality of explanations is absolutely first rate so everyone can access the work. I have also asked staff to ensure work is differentiated and there are challenge tasks where appropriate in subjects like Maths. Lastly, I have asked staff to ensure that

those students who are working hard are recognised for their efforts through Achievement Points and lots of comments.

To plan for our future provision we will be sending out a survey to both students and parents on the quality and quantity of the work being set in the early part of next week.

Please do keep feeding back to us although can I remind you that whilst some feedback from the CESA Facebook page does get passed back to us it is not an official forum and we can't respond to anything from there.

The best points of contact are:

Year 7 students Miss Cheeseman scheeseman@maidenerleghchilternedge.co.uk

Year 8-10 students Ms Biddiss cbiddiss@maidenerleghchilternedge.co.uk

Year 11 students Mrs Ashley cashley@maidenerleghchilternedge.co.uk

As we move forwards with this situation ensuring the mental health of the children is looked after is all important (hence the reduction in work quantity to reduce student anxiety). Our intention is to contact by phone all MECE households by the end of Wednesday to check the welfare of each student.

It goes without saying that you know your children best but here are some tips that could help as we move through the isolated social distancing world that we are currently inhabit.

Top Tip #1- Be realistic about what you can do

- You're not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply providing your children with some structure at home will help them to adapt.
- Experiment in the first week, then reflect. What's working and what isn't? Ask your children and involve them too by discussing it as a family.
- **Do what is right for your family!** If your children need longer breaks between working, do this. It needs to work for you and your children and every family will be different so don't compare yourself to how other people are doing it.
- Take care of your own health and wellbeing. This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle. The links below provide some helpful information about tips for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing during isolation:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/>

<https://thenationalcollege.co.uk/guides/wellbeing-during-isolation> This has a free downloadable poster with some great tips.

Top Tip #2- Keep to some kind of timetable wherever possible but be flexible

- Create and stick to a routine **if you can**. This is what children are used to and it might be helpful to continue this. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!
- Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership and they are more likely to follow this if they have helped create it.
- Please try and avoid children becoming too nocturnal. We have seen lots of examples of work being submitted after midnight. Obviously, if there is a query at this time staff won't respond but also a regular sleep pattern is another vital component in maintaining mental health.

- Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible. If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend or, equally, stop it if it is not working or they are getting frustrated. Leave things to one side and come back to them if needed.
- If you have more than 1 child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do Maths together – see what works for your household.
- Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life
- However, recognise that **it is okay to have a pyjama day once in a while!** We will all be doing it! Some days are harder than others and it is important to recognise and talk about this together. If everyone needs a break, the work can wait.

Top Tip #3- Make time for exercise and breaks throughout the day

- If you have a garden, use it regularly. If you don't, try to get out once a day as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 metres apart from others)
- If the weather is nice, go, the work can wait! Make the most of the sunny days and save some activities for days when the children are not going to be able to go outside.
- Joe Wicks is doing daily PE lessons on his YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyCLOPd4VxBvQafyve889qVcPxYEjdSTI>

Top Tip #4- Have fun together as a family!

- Make the most of being home together to spend time as a family. Eat meals together, take time to play games and any other fun activities that everyone can be part of!
- Get your children to write postcards to their grandparents or to pen pals to keep in touch to those who might be further away or more isolated in these difficult times.
- Use FaceTime or video calls to ask grandparents to listen to your children read or just generally keep in touch with these family members.
- Involve your children in home routines like cooking and household chores. These are all useful life skills and this is a perfect opportunity to share the load a bit!
- Accept that they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits and monitor what they are using to ensure it is age appropriate and being used safely.

We hope that these tips are useful and helps to alleviate some pressure that some people might be feeling about maintaining the same education that the children would be receiving at school.

Lastly, if it is safe, one of the best ways of helping your own mental health is to help others. There are a lot of volunteer opportunities for people to get involved in at present and helping the vulnerable, the elderly and the sick could be a great way of keeping the students active.

Keep safe, stay strong, look after each other and keep talking to us. We value your voice because we haven't done this before either!!!!

Yours



Andy Hartley
Headteacher