

# Home Learning



## *A Guide for Parents and Carers*

# Supporting your child at home

Distance learning can present us all with challenges. As a school, we want you to know that we are here to support you through the period of self-isolation your child must now enter.

The aim of this guide is to help you with some of the more practical aspects of distance learning so that you and your child get the most from their home-school environment.

If you have any questions about your child's home learning, please get in touch with the school in the usual way.



## 1. Establish routines and expectations

It is important to develop good habits from the start. Create a flexible routine and talk about how it's working over time. Chunk your days into predictable segments. Help your child get up, get dressed and ready to learn at a reasonable time. Everybody make your bed! Keep normal bedtime routines, including normal rules for digital devices.



## 2. Choose a good place to learn

Set up a physical location that's dedicated to school-focused activities. Make sure it is quiet, free from distractions and, if possible, has a good internet connection. Make sure an adult is able to monitor online learning, in order to practice good digital safety.

## 3. Stay in touch



Your child's class teacher mainly communicate with you via email, ensuring that everyone knows how to find the help they need to be successful. You can also call or email the school's admin team with any questions that are not linked to the home-learning curriculum.



#### 4. Help your child 'own' their learning



If children have to learn from home, we don't expect parents to be full-time teachers or to be educational and content matter experts. Instead, parents play a crucial role in providing support and encouragement. If your child finds their home-school learning difficult, try not to worry; struggling is allowed and encouraged! Don't help too much. Becoming independent takes lots of practice. At Newsham Primary, your child usually engages with other pupils and adults hundreds of times each day. Many of these social interactions will continue from a distance, but they will be different. You cannot replace them all, and that's OK.

“

OUR TASK IS TO HELP CHILDREN CLIMB THEIR OWN MOUNTAINS, AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE. NO ONE CAN DO MORE.”

- LORIS MALAGUZZI

#### 5. Begin and end the day by checking-in



In the morning, you might ask:

- *What subjects/tasks do you have today?*
- *How would you like to break up the day? Which activity/subject would you like to do first?*
- *What resources do you need?*
- *What can I do to help?*

At the end of the day you might ask:

- *How far did you get in your learning tasks today?*
- *Which activities did you enjoy most/least? Why?*
- *What did you discover? What was hard?*
- *What could we do to make tomorrow better?*

These brief grounding conversations matter. They will help your child to process the instructions they have received from their teachers, and it helps them organise themselves and set priorities. The level of support you will need to give to your child will depend on their age. Younger children may need much more help organising their time. Not all children thrive in distance learning environments; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines can help avoid later challenges and disappointments. They help children to develop self-management and executive functioning that are essential skills for life. Parents are good life coaches.



## 6. Establish times for quiet and reflection

For families with children of different ages, and parents who may also be unexpectedly working from home more often, it's good to build in some time for peace and quiet. Siblings may need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Many families will need to negotiate access to devices, priorities for wi-fi bandwidth and schedules throughout the day. Noise-cancelling headphones are an idea. Reading is fundamental. Reading provides a quiet space in the day and will often lead to unprompted self-reflection, particularly for older children.



## 7. Encourage physical activity and exercise

Living and working at home, we will all need some room to let off steam. Moving (independently and together as a family) is vital to health, wellbeing, and readiness for learning. It's a great opportunity to practice exercising with digital workouts and online instructors. Set new fitness goals and plan hands-on, life-ready activities that keep hands busy, feet moving, and minds engaged. You may want to think about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Now's a good time to think about increasing personal responsibility and pitching in.

## 8. Manage stress and make the most of an unusual situation

At the minute, we are still going through a time of major upheaval to our normal routines and ways of life, and there's a great deal of anxiety in the world right now. Emotions may be running high, and children may be worried or fearful. Parents may be stressed as well and children are often keenly aware of what is going on in their immediate environment and the world beyond. Children benefit when they get age-appropriate factual information and ongoing reassurance from trusted adults. If you need advice about how to talk to your child, we are happy to support you with this.



In these circumstances, it's often possible to reframe challenges as opportunities: for spending time together, discovering new ideas and interests, investing energy and attention in activities that often get pushed aside by everyday tasks and responsibilities. Experts advise that it's a good idea to slow down, find beauty, enjoy unexpected benefits, and express gratitude by helping others. Talking to your child about how this links to our 7Rs could help frame their thinking.



## 9. Monitor time on-screen and online

Distance learning does not mean staring at computer screens seven and half hours every day. Teachers will aim to build in variety.

Work together to find ways to prevent 'down time' from becoming just more 'screen time'. Daily physical activity can be a great way to have a break from the screen, whilst also boosting energy levels.



## 10. Connect safely with friends, and be kind

Human beings are social animals and social interaction is hugely important.

Help your children maintain contact with friends via safe online technologies. Key to this will be your efforts to monitor your child's contact with friends. Remind your child to be polite, respectful and appropriate in their communications, and to follow school guidelines in their interactions with others.



## Be realistic about what you can do

- We understand the challenges you are facing and we do not expect to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they would in school. Providing your children with some structure at home will help them to adapt to the new way of working;
- Experiment in the first few weeks, then take stock. What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too;
- Share the load if there are two parents at home. Split the day into 2-3 hour slots and take turns so you can do your own work. We understand that this is trickier for single parents. Do what you can.
- Take care of your own health and wellbeing. This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle.
- Don't let home learning become a battle between you and your child. Younger children especially will not understand that they are not on holiday and that they need to be learning at home. They will need time to get used to the new way of working.

## ALL LEARNING IS BASED IN PLAY

- Resources - items found around the home or commercially produced can be used in an open-ended way
- Space: indoors or outdoors, small and cosy - a nook, under a table covered with a blanket can become a place of imaginings
- Time: extended and uninterrupted time to play allows children to become deeply involved. No need for a 'school length' day or adding pressure to ourselves or children
- Being okay with some mess: early learning is messy and unpredictable in all respects
- Joining in: respect children's rules and decisions; supporting and enhancing the play rather than leading it.

## LEARNING TO BE HUMAN

Whilst learning is based at home, it can focus more acutely on learning how to be human — something that cannot be taught formally!

Being human is a key element of early learning in schools and requires parents, as our partners and in their role as children's 'first and most enduring educators' to be the main protagonists in distance learning environments.

Those who care for and educate young children at home have an unprecedented opportunity to exercise (even more than usual) the gift of nurture, and to reflect on their intuitive emotional response to themselves and their children in times of crisis.

## Keeping children safe online while home learning



Keeping children safe is our number one priority. Whilst your child is learning from home, school and families will need to work together to fulfil our safeguarding duties by looking out for any signs that a child may be at risk while working online.

It is very important that children at home have clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online (for example, using online resources that school hasn't recommended, such as YouTube channels). Two excellent ways of doing this are:

- UK Safer Internet Centre - to report and remove harmful online content
- CEOP - for advice on making a report about online abuse.

Additionally, we also have a school-based mechanism for reporting online content that you may be concerned about. You can access this by clicking on the 'whisper button' on our school website.

Report an issue to the school anonymously

