



24th April 2020

We are delighted to welcome you all back to school for the summer term 2020



Dear Families

As we start this new school term this week as a virtual school community, I want to start by saying a HUGE thank you to our whole school family. Please know that, although our doors are not physically open, we continue to be here for you and your family.

I hope you all had a good Easter Holiday if you were not working and that our working families managed to enjoy some relaxation time. We are so lucky that the sun has been shining! I know that some of our staff and families have been going through particularly difficult situations at the moment and I want you to know that our love, thoughts and best wishes are with you all. To support families experiencing bereavement and loss, our Educational Psychology service have created some very useful leaflets. These are attached as part of this email. They can also be found on the council website at the address below.

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210557/schools_and_learning/12049/educational_psychology_service/6

We Care

Please be reassured that these are unprecedented times and that many people are finding it harder to cope with as time goes on. There is no right or wrong way of doing things. We recognise that every family's situation and circumstances are different and may be changing over this period of lockdown. To offer additional support to our families, we now have a dedicated phone number that families can use to contact us through a call or text should they need assistance or support. The number is **07812517873**. Calls will be answered/returned by Mrs Cameron during the school day. Texts can be sent anytime and we will get back to you as soon as we can. We will also be using this number to 'check-in' with families just to see how you are doing. The school has access to supports offered by the Community Resilience Team and can make **confidential** referrals to East Lothian Foodbank.

Kindness

Respect

Co-operation

Free School Meals/Clothing Grants

We are aware that circumstances may have changed for some families as a result of Covid-19 and this may mean you are now eligible for Free School Meals and/or a Clothing Grant. If you think this may apply to you, please copy and paste the following link in your internet browser for further information and to access the forms:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210557/schools_and_learning/11899/free_school_meals_and_clothing_grants/4.

Learning

When I have met parents and carers in the community, the first thing that is usually said to me, a wee bit panicky, is "Oh I'm so glad I've met you. I can't get X to do their maths/reading/Joe Wicks/art/writing.....My standard response is "Please don't stress about it, you're not in trouble!" Please remember that we are not asking you to create a school in your home. We fully understand that many of you are either physically still at work or working from home in these very challenging circumstances. Many of our staff are juggling this too!

If you have managed to get a timetable organised with your child/children and are managing to complete set Google Classroom tasks together every day - you are doing GREAT! If you have struggled to create a timetable and have dipped into a few tasks and your child has played and had fun in the house or garden - you are doing GREAT! If your child has learned how to chop vegetables, made the family lunch, weeded the garden and cosied up and watched a movie with you - you are doing GREAT! If you have struggled to adjust to this new way of life, have not looked at Google Classroom but have followed the rules and kept you and your family safe and at home - you are doing GREAT!

Do not make 'school work' a battle for them or you. ❤️ To support you, on a Monday your child's class teacher will set "core tasks" to support, reinforce and consolidate your child's prior learning, especially in Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Well-being. We are doing this to give you the week to plan when you can carve out time to support your child with their core tasks. The teacher will also set extension tasks for children who would like to do a bit more. As much as possible, please try to encourage your child to do a little bit, often, so that they are still engaged in the daily routine of learning. We have been so impressed by the way in which our children have adapted to remote learning and the creative ways in which they are engaging with the tasks. Engaging in Google Classroom also allows your child and their teacher to check in together on school days. Staff love seeing and chatting with children over class Google Meets.

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Mrs Paterson will shortly be sending out a survey to generate your opinions on how we continue to support you to support your child's learning while we are not in school. Your thoughts and opinions are important to us.

Please try not to worry about your child regressing. Every child is in the same situation. Once your child is back in school, all teachers and support staff will work harder than ever to meet their needs from where they are. That is our job and teaching is our expertise! Staff will soon be reporting on pupils' work and progress for this session. This will be based on your child's attainment up to the Easter holidays. This means that many children will not meet the usual benchmarks for the end of year position. Please try not to worry about this as all schools and children will be in the same position. Guidance titled 'Supporting Pupils, Parents And Teachers - Learning During Term 4' has been issued by the Scottish Government this week and is also attached for your information. As with any new guidance, it will take time for East Lothian schools to interpret all the contents but please be assured that we are well on the way to meeting the recommendations. We will keep you posted with more information as we move through this term, including how we are supporting children through their transition to their next year stage.

Some supportive reminders...

- Children (and adults) are reassured by a sense of familiarity and routine, so where possible, it can be helpful to stick to a regular routine and set times. This means getting up and starting your day around the time you normally would on a weekday, as well as keeping lunch, dinner and bedtimes familiar. Differentiate the weekdays to the weekend to stop the days merging into one. As a family, establish ground rules e.g. wake up before 9am on weekdays vs. lie-ins at the weekend, dressing in daytime clothes on weekdays vs. jammies on the weekend. You may want to organise a regular special event e.g. pizza and movie night on Saturdays for something to look forward to and provide a sense of regularity.
- Now is a really good time to teach children essential life skills! They can be life lessons we want our children to learn e.g. hanging out the washing, changing their bed, dust and Hoover their bedroom or sew on a button. Spend time with them and show/suggest ways that they can do it. I am sure you will agree that these are invaluable skills. They will help our children to become increasingly self-sufficient, independent and resilient.
- Let them chat to friends. It's really important for the children to communicate with their friends as we know that they are really missing each other. As always,

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please be mindful of internet safety should your child be using social media Apps to do this. Try to limit screen time to strike a healthy balance.

- You and your child might find it helpful to create and write in a personal Gratitude Diary and make an entry every day. This would provide a reflection of this time when things get back to 'normal'. Framing the day's events in a positive statement allows us to manage our mental health, and when times get hard - and there will inevitably be days that we suffer more negative thoughts - you can reflect on the positives that are coming out of this experience. We are starting our online staff meetings with each person sharing their "Reason to be Cheerful!"

Please also remember that you can 'check in' with any of our very talented teachers if you have any questions about your child's set learning. Please ask them for help and guidance.

Here is a reminder of their Edubuzz email addresses:

Mrs Collier - mcollier@edubuzz.org

Mrs Paterson - jpaterson@edubuzz.org

Ms Jack - bjack@edubuzz.org

Mr Hunt - nhunt@edubuzz.org

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing team at Elphinstone for their on-going work and willingness to adapt our approaches to help our school community; planning and creating on-line resources, liaising with our children and families, working in the local hub and working together to ensure we are creating a supportive environment for everyone.

Be happy, play and stay safe. We miss you and hope to see you very soon.

Love

Mrs Cameron and all the staff at Elphinstone Primary School ❤️

