



Connaught

Junior School

"Caring, Confident, Committed"

Friday 27th March 2020

Dear Connaught Parents,

I wanted to write to you at the end of this rather surreal week to touch base and provide some additional communication from school. I know that my teachers, leaders and office staff have been in touch with most of you in one form or another, either by phone call or email, and in some cases have spoken to your children. (If you get a call with No Caller ID, it may be your child's teacher or someone from their year group team). It is important at this time for all of our families to still feel part of the school community, even though the vast majority of you are not able to come up to the school building. I know that I speak for all of our staff by saying that this enforced distance has made us feel very sad indeed.

First of all, I wanted to thank all of you for the efforts that you are making with your children's home learning. I hope you have found it useful – certainly the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive – and that the video tutorials have made your life a little easier as the actual teaching has been led by the teachers qualified to do this job. I am sure you can appreciate how long the videos are taking to create and the staff are frustrated that they can't do more. As I am also sure you can appreciate the teachers cannot tailor make these resources to fit each individual child, however they will be refining what they are doing week by week. We have been admired in the local school community and further afield for what we are offering for home learning. A teacher friend from New Zealand messaged me saying she had looked at our website and asked if she could steal some ideas; another teacher friend near Newcastle said that they had modelled their home learning on what we were doing and I have spoken to other local Heads who are very impressed too. When I asked what one local Head was doing for home learning, they replied, 'Nothing close to what you are doing!'

Please be reassured that it is normal for you and your family to have bad days. The children will be feeling unsettled, sensing how we, as adults, are all feeling and may react in ways you don't expect. It is OK to go off plan. It is OK to have a whole day break if it is all getting a bit too much. Do as much of the work as you can. Your primary focus is your child's happiness and wellbeing.

With that in mind, the children need to work at their own pace. Some children will power through and others will just complete Base Camp or Climbing. This is fine. You can carry work over to the next day if it doesn't get completed. But, just so you know, to avoid the pages on the school website getting too overloaded, we will be leaving two weeks worth of work on at a time. So, when the work from Week 3 goes on, the work from Week 1 will disappear. If your child is really struggling with the work set, you can access alternative work that is simpler from Twinkl, which is now free to use.

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

Headteacher: Miss S McGann

Deputy Headteacher: Mrs K Saunders

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Registered number: 0856427

Registered Office: 39 Guildford Road, Lightwater GU18 5SA



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In the case of significant issues with technology, it *may* be possible to organise packs of worksheets for your child. Please liaise with your child’s class teacher. If it is possible to facilitate this we will, but only in exceptional cases.

Teachers have loved seeing what the children have been doing but please remember that they are monitoring 30+ email addresses so don’t feel you need to send in absolutely everything that your child is producing! Teachers will respond when they can and when we are back at school the children can share their books with each other. Feedback on the videos is also always welcome – obviously mistakes happen so forgive us for those and be kind.

A group of teachers, leaders and support staff (including Complete Coaching) has been going, and will continue to go, onto the school site to interact face to face with the children who are eligible to be there. Those staff members are putting themselves and their families at risk and do this willingly to support the national effort. They should be applauded. Teachers at home are doing an absolutely stirring job of keeping on top of all the home learning and many other tasks such as home/school communication, to name but one. Support and office staff members are supporting all they can. A huge thank you to them all!

Lastly, I want to thank all of you. I know how hard this is for you. I am sure you have elderly relatives that you can’t see and are worried about what the future holds. You may have jobs in jeopardy and are trying to manage your children, your lives, your worries. Looking in the mirror I can see that my own frown lines have deepened over the last two weeks as I think about my own family and friends, as well as the school community, and I am sure I have even more grey hairs than I had before. However, we will get through this together if we all do as we are told to flatten the curve.

Only go out if absolutely necessary, practise social distancing and wash your hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds regularly.

Good luck to you all! You are doing a brilliant job!

Best wishes

Miss McGann