

Remote Learning



Background

On Wednesday 30th December 2020, primary schools in some areas – including Bromley – were informed that, for two weeks, teaching and learning would move to a remote model and that the only children in the school building would be those with parents or carers that are critical workers, or children that are considered to be vulnerable.

Following this, on the evening of Monday 4th January 2021, all schools were instructed to move to a remote learning model until at least the February half term.

The La Fontaine team has developed a remote learning model that we feel best supports our community and ensures that our children continue to receive a high quality of education, which is of a similar quality to the one that they would receive if they were in school.

La Fontaine Academy's approach to remote learning

As a school, we have made the decision to use Google Classrooms as a platform for delivering remote learning and to give access to a range of materials.

On a daily basis, teachers upload lessons that cover phonics and/or reading (depending on the year group), writing, maths and one other subject, e.g. history or French. Over the course of the week, children will have access to learning in every subject that they would normally be taught if they were in school. For Reception and Key Stage 1, approximately three hours of learning materials will be supplied; for Key Stage 2, it will be approximately four hours of learning materials.

Learning is presented in a variety of ways: teachers record videos that accompany presentations to introduce new material and model the tasks that they are asking the children to complete; a range of tasks and activities for the children to complete; quizzes; links to other educational sites with relevant and appropriate activities selected by the teachers. Activities are completed using Google Docs, or by non-digital methods, which can then be scanned or photographed and loaded onto Google Classroom.

Children are encouraged to complete the learning and submit for review by their teacher. Teachers give feedback a few times each day: the frequency and timing of this feedback is determined by the year group teachers based on what they feel is appropriate for the age group they are teaching.

Teachers monitor the engagement of all children and offer support and advice to those that are struggling to access materials. There are weekly phone calls home to check that children are coping well with their learning and to ensure that there are no concerns at home.

There are three assemblies each week, hosted via Zoom: Monday with Mr Tirrell; Wednesday with Phase Leaders; Friday with Mme Mitchell. These assemblies are an opportunity for our school community to come together and ensure that we all remain connected with each other; they are used to celebrate successes, as we usually would if we were in school. There are also weekly 'juice breaks' hosted by the class teachers to support informal social interaction between the children and the rest of their class.

Rationale for La Fontaine Academy's approach to remote learning

Since the first lockdown in March 2020, the team at La Fontaine Academy has learned a lot about remote learning and how best to support our children while they are at home. We have also been careful to consult research – as we would with any other aspect of our curriculum – to ensure that we are learning from the experience of others.

Synchronous vs. asynchronous learning

Synchronous learning is where all students are learning the same thing, at the same time, and at the same pace, e.g. via a 'live' lesson on Zoom. Asynchronous learning is where all students are learning the same thing, but at different times and at their own pace, e.g. via a pre-recorded video.

We have chosen an asynchronous approach to learning, as there are a number of clear and tangible benefits:

1. **Flexibility.** Children are able to access the learning at a time, and in a place, that is the most convenient for them and their family. If the family have decided to go for a walk, or to engage in another activity as a family, then they are able to do so without worrying that they are missing lessons. We also have some families that are currently in other countries, meaning that they are in different time zones, and asynchronous learning means that they are not disadvantaged by their location.
2. **Pacing.** Children do not all learn at the same pace and asynchronous learning supports this. Children have the ability to pause and rewind as necessary to ensure that they have understood the point that has been made by the teacher.
3. **Access to technology and support.** Many families will have several people working from home, including children that are learning remotely, so there may not be enough devices in the household to accommodate this. There is also a high strain on the home broadband if several people are on a video conference at the same time. Asynchronous learning enables families to schedule work around each other, ensuring that everyone is able to engage with their activities. It also enables parents or carers to be available at points of the day to support their children's learning in a way that their working day is not impeded.
4. **Quality assurance.** Having lesson content recorded allows phase and curriculum leads, as well as senior leaders, the opportunity to monitor the quality of the teaching and learning being provided, as well as the opportunity to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is being taught. This quality assurance process also helps to inform the content of the CPD training that is delivered to our staff.

Children still have access to their teachers via Google Classrooms and can ask questions and request additional support. The vast majority of the feedback that we have received from families at La Fontaine Academy is that this asynchronous approach works well for them and they would like it to continue.

Screen time

Some of the activities that we set for the children to complete do not require the children to be at a computer: they may be asked to investigate something around the house or garden; it may be that they need to make something; or it may be that they need to do something creative. We are very aware that during normal times, adults aim to restrict the amount of screen time young children have – and this is for good reason. We believe that we should still have the same approach to screen time, even if there is some small unavoidable increase to allow for remote learning. We recommend

that children spend no more than 30 minutes at the screen at one time and that they take a break away from the screen of at least 10 minutes; lessons can be paused and restarted to allow for these breaks.

Frequency of response to work

We want to ensure that all children are supported in a timely manner. As such, our teachers monitor the work that is submitted via Google Classrooms and respond as appropriate. We have decided to limit periods of response to two or three times a day (depending on the age of the children). This is in part to ensure that teachers have the time to develop further resources for upcoming remote learning, but also to ensure that children are not glued to the screen waiting for a response and start to treat Google Classrooms as a form of social media.

Curriculum coverage

We do not currently know how long this period of remote learning is going to continue. It is very important to us that our children continue to access a broad education and that we do not limit our curriculum to only the core subjects. By approaching remote learning in the way that we are, our teachers are able to ensure that all curriculum subjects are covered and that children still have a variety of lessons delivered. This variety will help to encourage engagement with the remote learning and will motivate children to participate in their lessons.

Parental support

We would like the children to complete work as independently as possible. It is important that the work that children submit has been completed by them, and not a parent, so that the teachers can accurately assess knowledge and plan future learning. However, we know that – just as in class – children do need support and encouragement to complete their work. This is particularly true for the younger children who may need to have their time managed for them.

Teachers will be calling home regularly to do a wellbeing check and this is a useful opportunity for parents to raise any issues so that appropriate support can be put in place. It is important that parents are honest with their feedback during these conversations.

The Department of Education have published some useful guidance on how parents can support their child's learning at home: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Additional support for pupils with particular needs

We recognise that some pupils, for example some pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), may not be able to access remote education without support from adults at home. We acknowledge the difficulties this may place on families, and so have arranged for some of our learning support assistants (LSAs) to be timetabled away from the critical worker provision in school to provide 1:1 tutoring sessions via Zoom. The timing and frequency of these sessions are organised based on need and availability; these sessions are managed by our Inclusion Team.

Access to devices

We have laptops available for families to borrow during the lockdown period. If a family needs access to a device, please let the class teacher know when they call, or contact the school office by

telephone (0208 353 4160) or email (office@lafontaineacademy.org). If a family should need printed materials, please contact the school office and they will arrange this for you.

Parity of remote learning with critical worker / vulnerable children provision

It is important to us that all children at La Fontaine Academy receive the same quality of teaching. The children that are in school are accessing the remote learning in the same way as the children at home. Teachers are focussed on planning and delivering high-quality lessons and materials for children; the support staff are in school with the critical worker / vulnerable children groups to provide the same support that parents at home are delivering.

Remote education for individual self-isolating pupils

When school re-opens to all children, the remote learning for children that are self-isolating will differ from the approach for whole groups of children, e.g. whole year group or whole school. This is due to the challenges of teaching pupils both at home and in school. If individual children are isolating, the learning materials that are being used in class will be made available on Google Classrooms, but there will not be videos to accompany those materials.

Summary

Evidence from research tells us that the quality of resources that are available to children is by far the most important factor in ensuring an excellent remote learning. We believe that our remote learning approach ensures that all children at La Fontaine Academy continue to access an excellent education from a dedicated and talented staff that are committed to delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. The methods that we are using are the best that are available to us and we are confident that our children will continue to progress, despite being unable to be at school.

Further reading

What's working well in remote learning (Ofsted publication):

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whats-working-well-in-remote-education/whats-working-well-in-remote-education>

Asynchronous learning:

1. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-supporting-students-to-learn-remotely/>
2. <https://www.tes.com/news/4-reasons-pre-recorded-lessons-are-your-best-option>
3. <https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-schools-online-learning-are-live-lessons-really-better-recorded-ones>
4. <https://elearningindustry.com/is-it-time-to-ditch-synchronous-classes>

Screen time:

1. <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/health-impacts-screen-time-guide-clinicians-parents>
2. <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/parenting-digital-age-managing-screen-time>