



Thursday 22nd October, 2020

Dear parents and carers,

As salamu alaykum.

I am writing to provide you with information regarding the Government's expectations around virtual blended learning and how we are responding to them.

As a school, we have brought together leaders and teachers to discuss the aspirations and expectations of the Government and the practicalities of maintaining fully operational schools alongside the additional requirements of virtual blended learning. Our aim is to provide a solution that is effective and efficient for all: children, parents and school.

The information that follows is a detailed account of our plans so you are fully informed. Of course, no plan ever completely survives contact with COVID-19 and so, as and when we do make any amendments, we will update you accordingly via Class Dojo, email and the school website.

Quick Summary:

For those of you that just want the main headlines:

- **For individual pupils isolating at home**, while school is open, we are providing a 'Right Now' curriculum using printed resources which are delivered to your door on a weekly basis.
- **For whole classes, bubbles and schools isolating**, we are providing teacher-taught lessons in the form of lectures (pre-recorded lessons) and feedback through **Showbie**.
- **We are implementing this now**. All the hard work has been done in the background to set up devices and accounts. We will only need 1 day to get learning activities live.
- **You can help by making sure you have access to the internet and a device per child in your house** or letting school know if this isn't the case – this situation will be going on for a while and having the right tools for the job are essential! We can support with the technical requirements if needed.
- **We will still be using Class Dojo for communication** – please do not disconnect from or delete Class Dojo as this will remain one of our primary means of communication. Showbie **does not** replace Class Dojo, it complements and supports it.

We have had to think carefully and make significant changes to enable us to have an effective blended virtual learning policy. There will be a short period of time before everything is up and running, and staff and pupils are trained. This will take one day from when a Bubble closes or a lockdown is announced, but then we believe we will have some excellent resources to support your children both in and out of school, now and in the future.

We very much value your feedback, so we will survey the children and parents who access our Virtual Blended Learning offer to ensure we are getting things right. We will make changes we need to and communicate these via Class Dojo, email and the school website.

Full Explanation

Context – Why are we making these changes?

Alongside the government expectations which are laid out in the guidance for the full reopening of schools, we are really keen to make sure that the good work done to fill any gaps created by lockdown is not lost. For this reason we are keen to employ blended virtual learning strategies that recap and consolidate core learning to make sure that pupils are ready to move forward when they return to school. We have aligned the solutions with the culture and purpose of the school to ensure it reflects our teaching for learning fundamentals.

One of the key things we have tried to take into account is the changing nature of our situation and it is essential that we are prepared for a desirable return to normality but also further disruption. We have selected technology rich solutions because they provide schools and pupils with an increased ability to communicate and learn. We understand this might not be everyone's preferred strategy but this style of solution should work for the vast majority of families and we will work to support families where issues exist.

Internet and technology access

The activities pupils will complete will be done online. The use of technology will also allow virtual blended learning to be responsive and will connect school and home much more readily.

We are training staff and pupils in the use of these resources in school and creating helpful videos for parents to follow when supporting their children at home. The resources are very user friendly and shouldn't need much support at all when in use.

We have made sure that the resources we have selected will all run on a variety of devices so the overwhelming majority of laptops and tablets will be fine.

School has already asked for information about internet access and technology at home and will endeavour to make sure that this barrier is removed for all pupils. We have made many adjustments in school to support this and are more than happy to support families do that too.

We have devices that can be taken home during isolation, and we will make them available for pupils that do not already have them at home, but we don't have enough devices for every child. Therefore, if your child has a device, or you can provide one for them, it will help other families and schools to have the capacity to make sure no child is disadvantaged when learning from home.

Why aren't we live streaming lessons?

Primary school classrooms are complex places and there are many elements of classroom life which are not appropriate for sharing. We have debated this issue at length and the reality of streaming a lesson is not as simple as a teacher standing and delivering information to pupils who sit quietly receiving the information. Teaching involves encouragement, behaviour management, highlighting pupils who have done well, making jokes, going off-task, trains, snow falling, children being ill and many other things! We genuinely believe that our teachers do an excellent job in the classroom but staff are understandably nervous about being watched from living rooms and the potentially difficult circumstances that could occur. There are huge complexities in the many environmental factors that exist and considerations stretch far beyond the individual teacher or child. As a result, we have opted to record Zoom PowerPoint lessons for each subject. Children will see the teacher's face, hear the teacher's voice and see the high quality teaching presentation to support them in their learning. The added benefit of this is that you, as parents, can rewind and replay the video if your child misunderstands or misses something. This would not be possible with live-streamed lessons.

Please find below a detailed account of the strategies we have opted to use and for whom.

STRATEGY: 'Right Now' learning.

USED FOR: individual pupil(s) self-isolating at home.

The solution we have designed meets government requirements by utilising software (Class Dojo) to share a learning pathway. We have also located and arranged for high-quality online teaching videos to provide new content to pupils, linked to their current learning in school as much as possible.

There is a difficulty when a small number of pupils are at home, require access to virtual blended learning, while their teacher is still teaching a class full-time in school. Primary schools do not have spare teachers and classes are taught full time. This means there is no additional capacity for teachers to 'teach' pupils at home whilst they are teaching pupils in school. We have, however, devised a comprehensive plan which aims to support children's learning during enforced periods of absence:

Details

- The school will provide a 'Right Now' curriculum covering the isolation period (10-15 days) which will support the pupils' virtual blended learning.
- Teachers or Support Staff will provide three timeslots per week, for 15-minute catch-ups. The purpose of these are to check well-being and check progress on the 'Right Now' learning activities.

Resources

There are a range of learning activities on offer, in line with our broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils will therefore need some key resources to help them access learning, namely;

- An internet connection
- A device large enough to use learning software on and take photos and videos with
- Paper – lined and plain
- Pens, pencils and colouring equipment
- Scissors

Where parents do not have access to these resources, school will provide them free of charge. Please speak to your child's class teacher via Class Dojo or contact the school office directly. These will be delivered to your door or posted via Royal Mail.

STRATEGY: 'Blended Virtual Learning'

USED FOR: Bubble(s) self-isolation and school closures



The learning platform we are using is Showbie

Your children have been trained in how to log into to Showbie and how to access, complete and submit learning via the platform.



Please watch our **How to Videos** on our website for further support.

showbie

The solution we have designed is a mixture of learning specific teacher input and intelligent software to support our children in achieving excellence. Teachers will feedback to the whole class and individuals via Showbie and the virtual blended learning offer will be aligned with the curriculum that would normally be taught in school.

For teacher input, teachers will select the most appropriate method to explain new concepts and new learning. This may include videos or pre-record slides with a voice over, as indicated above. These methods will provide the knowledge that pupils need to acquire and apply.

Details:

- By 9am each morning the class teacher will submit a list of the day's activities and resources on Showbie and Class Dojo.
- Activities will be a blend of practicing skills and introducing new knowledge.
- Each activity will have a timescale for how long we expect your child to work on it - this will be roughly equivalent to what they would do in class.
- Each activity will have clear instructions on how to complete it.
- Pre-recorded explanatory videos may be used to support learning and introduce new concepts and knowledge. This will be either high-quality online teaching videos or made by the teacher .
- Where teachers are creating video content, they will film their slides taking account of safety protocols.

We appreciate that having several children of varying ages in a single household poses a different set of challenges; there is flexibility built into our Virtual Blended Learning offer so parents can support their children at different times of the day. Please talk to us if you feel this is going to apply to you. Furthermore, by pre-recording lessons, you can replay and revisit the learning experience as many times as needed or at different times of the day as you may require.

I hope you will see from this letter that we have spent a long time preparing a comprehensive and supportive Blended Virtual Learning programme for the Zaytouna family. We know that a consistent approach to learning – whether in the classroom or in the front room – is vital to ensuring the future success of our children.

We know that we achieve the best possible outcomes for our children when we work together; if you are experiencing any problems or have any concerns about your child's virtual blended learning, please do not hesitate to contact us. The sooner we are made aware of an issue, the sooner we can work together to rectify it. We've thought about the most common problems you may experience and have given you the contacts for these issues. If you experience a problem that is not listed, please contact school for us to direct you to the best person.

Who do I contact if I have a problem?

I don't have a device for my child or access to the internet.	Please contact the school office on 01332 383379
My child can't log into their Showbie account.	Contact your child's class teacher for their username or password.
My child is having trouble accessing and/or completing the learning in Showbie.	Contact your child's class teacher via Class Dojo.
I'm not connected on Class Dojo	Contact the school office on 01332 383379
I'm concerned about my child's safety online	Contact Mr Jones on 01332 383379

Inshallah, we will not need to utilise our Blended Virtual Learning offer. But please be assured that if we do face a situation whereby children need to learn from home, we have the systems and procedures in place to support meaningful learning, with a minimum of inconvenience to parents.

As always, we welcome your feedback. If you wish to discuss anything contained in this letter or have questions or queries, please contact me at school and I will be happy to answer them or direct you to the best person in school.

At Zaytouna, we pride ourselves on #DoingThingDifferently and our Digital Strategy is at the heart of this. Remember, the jobs your children will do in the future have not yet been created – who knows what career they will enjoy. Whatever that may be, they will have the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed.

Yours sincerely



Mr R. Jones
Deputy Headteacher & Digital Lead.