



DOLLAR ACADEMY

Mrs Morrison: Prep School Term 3 Welcome

Dear Parents

I hope this email finds you and your families keeping well in these strange times. I must say the recent sunshine and emergence of spring outside has certainly buoyed my spirits over the last few days.

We very much look forward to welcoming your children, and to a certain extent yourselves, back to our "virtual school" tomorrow. I know there will be stumbling blocks and questions over the first few days of virtual learning – it is a new experience for all of us – so I wanted to try to give you some reassurance and straightforward advice on how to approach the teaching and learning with your children, at least in the early stages as everyone tries to establish new routines and ways that will work in individual family contexts. This is important, for we know that you are all coping with different ways of managing your own workloads, together with supporting your children's learning (as well as feeding and entertaining them within the confines of the lockdown) and we appreciate you may be at different stages of digital readiness too, so we have tried to put together a progressive programme that will build gently as our confidence collectively grows.

Whilst at school we follow a fairly rigid timetable, and it is good for children to have an orderly and well understood rhythm and balance to their day, we know that this is not always going to be possible at home – life just gets in the way. With perhaps several siblings at home, and your own work too, computer time might need to be shared around, first thing in the morning might be the best time for a short walk rather than spelling and just before lunch might be good for some cooking or baking! So we have tried not to be prescriptive on actual times, rather we are providing guidance for learning that can be used throughout each day, together with activities for Art, PE and Music that can be scheduled during the week to fit with your family and circumstances.

Here are some suggestions on how to approach things, at least initially:

- Some kind of exercise is often a good way to start the day - please refer to the PE department's posts for ideas and I gather Joe Wicks' workouts on YouTube at 9.00am are very popular.
- Try to do some Maths and some Language work in the morning and perhaps some Topic work, Art or Cooking in the afternoon.
- We often start the morning and afternoon sessions with some quiet personal reading (15 minutes); the children are used to doing this and find it a good way of settling down to work thereafter.
- 20 - 30 minutes of concentrated effort (with no distractions or diversions) in one session is more than adequate; try putting a timer on and then take a break afterwards.
- If you can, set up a designated working area that your child sees as their study area (equivalent to their desk at school).
- Encourage your child to be independent in making sure they have the correct equipment in their study area – paper, jotters, sharpened pencils etc.

- You may wish to store finished work in a special folder, which could be digital; everything does not need to be printed out.
- Try to encourage your children to have a go at tasks for themselves, before asking you. The work has been planned so that it is achievable by all, with some guidance or input from yourselves at times (and it's logical that Prep 1 and Prep 2 may need more parental input than Prep 5).
- The work does not need to be perfect but the setting out of the work should be as they have been shown in school, and do try to date things. Ask questions such as, "Is this how Mrs Harewood likes you to do it?", "Would Mrs Leslie be happy with this?" Presentation standards are important and need reinforcing.
- Self-reflection is really important – before they say "I'm done" ask them what they are pleased with about it.....is there anything they would change or anything they would like to find out more about.....
- Good fillers to break up the learning are mindful colouring, sketching, free writing, keeping a diary, touch-typing (Dance Mat) and of course any and all craft activities and there are lots of useful websites to go to for ideas.

We would like to see how this first week goes and are very happy to receive questions and feedback to help us develop things. If your child is struggling with something it is important that you let us know so that we can perhaps provide a different way of going about it. The email address prep@dollaracademy.org.uk will be monitored by Mrs Barbour and myself (with specific questions channelled on to individual teachers) and we certainly aim to respond on the day of enquiry.

Work for the following week will be released on Firefly each Saturday. You must not feel that everything has to be done and do remember that what you might be able to achieve 1:1 will differ from what is achievable in a classroom with different diversions and paths of interest and enquiry. We do encourage children to ask questions to expand their learning down routes that interest them and this might be something you can take forward with them through further supported research.

In future weeks we shall be introducing methods of submitting certain pieces of work back to the teacher for marking but initially please feel free to carry out some marking if you would like. The "two stars and a wish" method of giving positive feedback and a target to work on might be a useful approach on certain tasks.

And the next step will be teacher led learning in certain activities which we will be introducing over the next few weeks and will provide further guidance on.

I hope some of this may be helpful. Your children have two very solid terms of learning behind them on which to build and are all incredibly capable and willing learners so please do not worry too much about the small details, seek our help on anything at all and hopefully enjoy being part of our teaching and learning world!

Kindest regards



Alison Morrison
Head of Prep and Junior School