



Governor Monitoring Report – Remote Learning April 2021

Following the national lockdown from 5th January – 8th March 2021, the governors of St. Ethelbert's RCP were keen to find out more about the school's provision for remote learning. At the Curriculum, Pupil Welfare and Community Committee meeting, held on 8th March 2021, governors received a report from Miss Murphy (Curriculum Leader), who outlined details of the provision in all year groups, which reflected the school's Remote Learning Policy. Following this meeting, four governors decided to gather the views of both pupils and parents so that further improvements could be made in the future, if remote learning was required. An online survey was created, whilst pupil interviews took place via Zoom on 25th March 2021. The following report outlines governor findings; it also addresses some of the suggestions made by parents to help improve future provision.

Pupil Interviews

Governors questioned twelve children from Years 3 and 4 and twelve children from Years 5 and 6; a cross-section of pupils were interviewed, including those who had worked in school during the lockdown; those who had worked online and those who had had paper-based learning.

Of the children who accessed Key Worker provision in school, the following points were noted:

- The children had appreciated the time in school and had been happy; they recognised that the small group sizes enabled them to receive additional adult support. They also enjoyed the quiet atmosphere in school and the lack of distractions
- Without exception, all the children felt safe in school; they commented on the Covid measures put in place, such as regular hand-washing and social distancing
- Children from both groups missed having their usual teacher but enjoyed having the opportunity to work with different staff
- All the children missed having their friends in school, not only socially, but also because they missed their support during lessons
- The children were able to describe in detail a typical day in school – they followed exactly the same activities as those working at home, although their work was recorded in an exercise book rather than online. In addition, they also had PE three times per week, delivered by our sports coaches, and music once a week, delivered by Mrs Lindop

Of the children who worked online, the following points were noted:

- When asked if there were any activities done online which they would like to see continued in class, the children said that they had enjoyed the step-by-step drawing classes; they would also like to use Seesaw for homework activities
- All the children agreed that learning at home was much more difficult. They spoke about various technical difficulties with their devices, which sometimes interrupted their learning. They also missed the support of teaching staff, saying that although written and audio messages from teachers helped, it wasn't the same as being able to ask for immediate support in class. The children also commented on the difficulties that parents had in supporting their learning, either due to lack of time or expertise
- Without exception, the children interviewed said that the online feedback provided by their teachers was helpful. Some mentioned that it made them feel positive and gave them encouragement. Others understood that it helped them to improve their work or to give them suggestions which would help next time. One child said that they didn't get much work sent back for editing or correction but this was a positive sign because it gave them confidence that they were on the right track
- Almost all of the group were able to describe issues they had experienced with devices. Many children had to share laptops with their siblings, meaning that learning had to be carefully organised within the home. For example, often, priority had to be given to siblings at high school, as most of their lessons were live. One child said that being able to loan a laptop from school helped the situation. Other

children described how with siblings and parents working from home, internet connection was poor; it sometimes took a long time for pictures etc. to upload.

- Generally, the children in the Y3/4 group were able to be supported by their parents. For the older children, the experience was mixed. This was because parents and older siblings were engaged in their own online work and couldn't support the child. For some activities, some parents found it difficult to help or explain things properly
- Many children commented that sometimes maths and English activities were difficult to read on the screen and it was also difficult to write answers – it would have been better to use paper-based learning in these instances. In particular, the children found writing activities difficult online, especially when they were required to edit work. In Y5/6, some children reported that art activities were difficult due to the lack of resources at home
- Almost all of the children interviewed had organised their learning in some way. For example, in Y3/4, children tended to do reading, writing and maths activities in the mornings and do the other activities later in the afternoon. Pupils in Y5/6 made their own timetables and tried to follow these each day. One child reported that she would often have to help her younger siblings and so tended to complete her own work later in the afternoon

Of the small sample of children who used paper-based learning, the following points were noted:

- Working on paper solved the problems of poor internet connectivity and the difficulties of writing on a screen
- Picking up work on Mondays and Wednesdays was great, as it formed part of their daily exercise and allowed the children and parents to keep in touch with school
- The children agreed that they were set enough work for each day
- These children also organised their day using a timetable

The following points were made by all the children:

- Many liked the online reading scheme, enjoying pressing buttons to turn the page. The fiction books were very popular, with the children enjoying the quizzes at the end because they were challenging. Some of the older children thought there were some good books in the scheme but would have liked more to choose from. They also reported that there were some technical issues which were frustrating. Some children said that the online scheme was good but they preferred to read real books
- The children were able to give a long list of the activities they particularly enjoyed – these included: Maths; English; Science; PE; Geography and Art. The older children found topics such as 'space' and 'volcanoes' fascinating and liked the Oak Academy resources. Some children had a difference of opinion – for example, they didn't like spelling activities; they also found some aspects of maths difficult because of the lack of adult support and the difficulties of doing work online rather than on paper
- Unanimously, the children found the use of videos, whether made by their own teacher or from another source such as Oak Academy, extremely helpful. Some children said that it was more like being in a classroom and they liked the fact that the videos could be rewound so that points could be explained again
- The children enjoyed listening to their teacher telling stories; they felt it kept them in touch with school and it was nice to hear their teacher's voice. One child listened to stories while eating his breakfast!
- The younger children felt that they had made progress during lockdown. This was because they had worked hard, with some children receiving a card from Mrs Messham in the post for good effort. They also recognised the positive feedback they had received from their teachers as a sign of their progress. Some of the older children also felt they had made progress – one child said they had learned to work more independently online because they couldn't rely on the teacher for support. A child who had worked in school felt that he had made very good progress because of the small group support he had received. A number of the older children recognised that they may have fallen behind in some areas, particularly in maths. They felt this was due to a lack of face-to-face support or because the children weren't as focussed as if they had been learning in school
- All the children enjoyed participating in the Zoom lessons, particularly as it gave them the chance to see their friends. They also appreciated the opportunity to hear their teachers explain how to do some of the work set.

Parental Survey

(Please note that as parents could choose multiple answers for some questions, percentages will not always add up to 100)

Sixty-nine parents responded to the governors' online survey, representing ninety-one children from a range of age groups:

Year Group	Number of Children
Nursery	8
Reception	10
Y1	13
Y2	12
Y3	15
Y4	12
Y5	8
Y6	13

Responses indicated the kind of education each of the children had accessed during lockdown:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
In-school Key Worker provision	21	30.4%
Online learning	41	59.4%
Paper-based learning	13	18.8%
Paper-based learning uploaded to Seesaw	16	23.2%
Did not engage	2	2.9%

Governors wanted to know about the availability of devices for the children. Responses were as follows:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Child has own laptop	17	24.6%
Child has own tablet	35	50.7%
Child has to share a device	18	26.1%
Child has no access to a device	8	11.6%
Child borrowed a laptop from school	3	4.3%
Child didn't engage with remote learning	1	1.4%

Governors asked about the amount of work set during the week:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Just right	43	63.3%
Too much	11	15.9%
Too little	1	1.4%
Don't know – child in school	11	15.9%
Don't know – didn't engage	2	2.9%

Governors asked if parents were able to support their children with their learning. The responses were as follows:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Yes, for most activities	26	37.6%
Yes, but only where required	36	52.2%
No, child completed work independently	7	10.1%

No, child was in school	7	10.1%
Didn't engage	2	2.8%

The children enjoyed the following activities:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Maths	39	56.5%
Reading	30	43.5%
Newsround	28	40.6%
Story time	27	39.1%
PE / Yoga	25	36.2%
Writing	21	30.4%
Phonics	19	27.5%
Creative task	19	27.5%
Spelling & Grammar	14	20.3%
Science	14	20.3%
Wider curriculum (e.g. geography)	13	18.8%
RE	8	11.6%
Collective worship	7	10.1%
Zoom calls	1	1.4%

The children found the following activities difficult:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Maths	22	31.9%
Spelling & Grammar	17	24.6%
Writing	15	21.7%
Wider curriculum (e.g. geography)	14	20.3%
Science	13	18.8%
Reading	9	13%
Phonics	7	10.1%
RE	6	8.7%
PE / Yoga	3	4.3%
Newsround	3	4.3%
Story time	2	2.9%
Collective worship	2	2.9%
Creative task	1	1.4%

Governors asked if teacher-made videos which explained how to do certain tasks were useful; responses were as follows:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Very helpful	48	69.6%
Fairly helpful	7	10.1%
Didn't use them	4	5.8%
Unhelpful	3	4.3%
Don't know, child in school	6	8.7%

In response to the question “Was the feedback given to your child helpful?” the following information was collected:

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Very helpful	45	65.2%
Fairly helpful	15	21.7%
Unhelpful	7	9.9%
Don't know, child in school	1	1.4%

Governors asked parents if their child had joined in with Zoom calls.

Response	Number of Children	Percentage of responses
Yes	49	71%
No	20	29%

Parents were asked to comment on what they liked about the school's remote provision. Responses included:

- *A wide range of activities and a lot of help on some of the activities with the videos*
- *Zoom meetings to catch up with friends*
- *I liked being able to see how well my son was learning; the work was just right and not too hard to understand. It was easy for me to explain it to my son. If he was struggling, I was able to guide him until he understood*
- *It was explained really well what needed to be done*
- *It kept the child occupied and gave parents something to start with*
- *It was very easy to use and my child understood what was asked of them*
- *The work was constant and so they had enough work for each day*
- *The ease of access*
- *It was flexible so the children did not have to wake up early*
- *There were various tasks; the teachers tried very hard to engage with parents and were always on hand to help*
- *The fact that the teachers tried to leave a comment for each activity*
- *The teachers were always there when you needed them. Any help the children needed, the teachers were very supportive and understanding of certain situations*
- *The teachers always updated the status of my children's work and where they needed to correct things*
- *It was very organised and there was plenty for the children to do*
- *Helped us parents to understand that we are capable of helping more with our children's school tasks*
- *It was not time-bound so we could fit it around other daily commitments*
- *I liked the videos where the teachers communicated with the children*
- *I liked the way the school didn't put on pressure on us about times*
- *The fantastic remote learning provision has enabled my child to progress with his school work and stay on track during these uncertain times. They have helped him learn many new things in a range of subjects and I have noticed it has enabled him to maintain his stamina when working. The Zoom meetings gave my child a boost, when he was able to interact with his friends and teacher. I think that Seesaw is a brilliant app and the communication between learner and teacher was great. Receiving feedback; being able to ask questions and how clearly the tasks were presented, all worked really well*
- *We liked that there were lessons per subject and they really had the children thinking. The teachers explained the tasks well and the children were able to follow the instructions*
- *I got to work with my child and see what they could achieve and how hard they try*
- *Everything is perfect, thank you*
- *Fantastic help from the teachers*
- *How much effort was put in to make sure my child was able to continue learning from home; the time taken to comment on every piece of work submitted; the comments were very helpful both for me and my child*

Parents were asked to comment on how our remote provision could be improved.

Some parents were happy with the provision and felt that improvements were not required:

- *I feel you have been doing as much as you possibly can to help children with their learning at home, while they are not in school, and have supported parents as much as possible*
- *I feel that there is not much that could be done to make it better*
- *I think that what was done was more than enough; the option between online and paper-based learning was given and provided daily. There was no pressure for my son to do everything perfectly, just to try his best. He has learned so much through the work that has been provided*

Suggestions for improvement given by parents could be grouped under a number of broad themes.

Amount of work

A number of parents felt that the amount of work set each day was too much, with some commenting on the stress this created. The following comments were representative of this view:

- *A lot of work was set which my children found quite overwhelming...*
- *I think there were too many activities in one day to complete, which stressed my child out some days to get them completed*
- *Reduce the workload a bit*
- *I believe that for some children and parents, the amount of daily tasks was fine and reasonable but not all the kids have the same level and not all parents have the same capacity to teach*
- *Additional tasks added pressure... not completing them created a sense of disadvantage*
- *Too much was set and parents were not put into consideration, as we still had to work as well as do the home learning*
- *I think there were too many activities sent each day and the stress some of the children felt was heart-breaking at times. I do believe that work should be set at home but it should be looked at how much each day. I feel the children's mental health suffered a lot. I also feel the children were just rushing through activities to complete them all, so they weren't really learning about the subject, what it meant or retaining any information*
- *It was too much with very little time so they had to rush to finish them. It made them feel upset and so stressed; plus the bond between kids and their parents was getting so tense during the day and they ended up fighting*

Governor response:

Governors and school staff recognise that, during lockdown, every family's situation was different. Many parents had to juggle work with home schooling; some parents had to support more than one child, whereas many parents, as evidenced by the 63% who felt that the children received just the right amount of work, were able to manage. In such unprecedented times, parents just had to do their best. Nationally, it is recognised that home learning put a great amount of pressure on parents, particularly those with no teaching experience. Unfortunately, this situation was completely out of school's hands, although a number of parents contacted teachers and senior leaders to seek advice and support when things became difficult.

The amount of work set each day had to reflect the government's expectations for remote learning:

- **Years 1 and 2 – approximately 3 hours per day**
- **Years, 3, 4, 5 and 6 – approximately 4 hours per day**
- **For Nursery and Reception, there was no time limit due to the young age of the children; instead a certain number of tasks were set, taking into account the intensive adult support that these children would need**

The school also had a duty to set work which covered a range of subject areas, as well as activities which might help the children to maintain the progress they made from September – December when they were in school. Data from assessments shows that, despite the January-March lockdown, most children have generally continued to progress, with 47% making strong progress in reading, 42% in

writing and 56% in maths. Parents should be proud of how they supported their children in any way during this difficult period.

Devices

Some parents suggested that the school provides laptops for children to use at home. Some of the comments included:

- *Give the children laptops*
- *If the children do not have enough devices to do their work at home, it's hard for them. Therefore, we kindly request the school to provide the devices*

Governor response:

Parents will have heard of the government's pledge to provide laptops for schools, in order to help them deliver remote education. St. Ethelbert's was allocated 23 devices - these were loaned to families according to need, with those without any technology being given priority. In addition, Mrs Munro supported some parents with obtaining extra mobile data. In an ideal world, the school would have loved all children to have access to some sort of device but this wasn't possible. Therefore, the school's remote provision had to take into account these inequalities. Consequently, as mentioned in a parental comment earlier, school did not set daily deadlines, understanding that in some homes, devices were being shared between multiple children and that work might have to be completed at different times during the day. The option to choose paper-based learning also supported some families.

Feedback

Although 86.9% of parents felt that feedback from teachers was useful in some way, seven parents disagreed. The comments below reflect this view:

- *Very little feedback given*
- *No comments were given to my child*
- *Didn't receive any feedback*
- *Nowhere near enough feedback*

Governor response:

These comments do not reflect the school's practice. Staff provided some sort of feedback for all activities. To be mindful of teacher workload, only some pieces were marked in depth each day (e.g. reading comprehension; maths; writing; grammar and spelling etc.). Written or verbal feedback was posted whenever a piece of work needed correcting or editing or if a child was praised for a particularly good piece of work. Shorter tasks (such as Newsround reports) received a 'like' and were approved. Parents whose children did not engage were contacted by members of staff; if they continued to disengage then this was parental choice and not the fault of the school.

Zoom Lessons

The majority of suggestions regarding improvements which could be made to the school's remote provision, related to the use of Zoom as a tool for teaching and learning. Most parents said that their children enjoyed the sessions, primarily as a vehicle for catching up with friends. Many parents would have preferred more Zoom calls each week, whilst a small minority would have liked most lessons being delivered via Zoom.

The following comments reflect these views:

- *I think that the teachers should do more video lessons with the children, as they can explain certain things better than parents; also the kids may feel like they are in school and concentrate more on their work*
- *The fact that Zoom calls did not take place during the first lockdown was disappointing and only having four this term is not great*
- *Daily morning Zoom meetings with register, to encourage and set up the children for daily learning*

- *Try to Zoom at least twice per week, because the children missed the presence of their teachers*
- *There could have been more regular Zoom calls and more teacher support*

Governor response:

As with all schools, St. Ethelbert's has reflected on its remote learning offer since the first lockdown, and has made every effort to improve this. Government guidelines, updated since 2020, have helped all schools to focus on what is the correct approach for their school community. Therefore, in addition to the activities uploaded onto Seesaw and paper-based learning, the decision was made to include weekly Zoom calls from Years 1-6 during the second lockdown.

Governors are aware that some schools have operated a system of daily 'live' lessons for some of their children. However, governors have to weigh up the needs of our school community and it is our opinion, that the use of daily 'live' lessons in place of the current provision, would have seriously disadvantaged many of our children and would not have met the needs of the majority of our families.

This is because:

- **Those children having to share devices with siblings, might not have been able to participate due to timing issues**
- **Activities would not have been as well differentiated, meaning that the learning might not have met the children's needs**
- **There would have been less flexibility with regards to when the children completed their work**
- **Teachers would not be able to provide personal feedback to each pupil to move them on with their learning**
- **Some parents already had technical issues accessing the Zoom meetings which did take place**

Governors agree with parents that, if in the event of another national lockdown or a bubble closure, additional Zoom meetings will be organised to ensure that the children remain connected with their teachers and peers. However, these will not happen on a daily basis nor will they replace the activities uploaded onto Seesaw.

The governors would like to thank all those parents who took the trouble to respond to our survey. Each point of view was taken on board, and where it is felt these suggestions meet the needs of our school community, these will be addressed, if remote education is needed in the future.

The governors really enjoyed interviewing the children, who gave an honest and open assessment of the positives and negatives of remote education. Governors recognise that they were only able to speak to a limited sample of children and that other children might have very different experiences. Nevertheless, governors were able to confirm that the school's Remote Learning Policy was adhered to through listening to the children's responses.

Finally, the governors would like to thank the staff of St. Ethelbert's RCP, who worked so hard under such difficult circumstances during the latest national lockdown, whether that be in school or remotely. The progress made by so many of our children since September 2020 is a testament to their expertise and care.

Judith Senior
Angela Meskell
Joe Roberts
Pat Onukwuli

Governors of St. Ethelbert's RCP