

Re: Lower School - Home Learning

Dear Parents,

I'd like to thank all of you who have responded to the questionnaire sent out last week. We really appreciate your insights and feedback.

We recognise that every family has its own individual circumstances and we want to reassure you that we are bearing this in mind as we make our plans. We want to minimise undue pressure by offering a flexible and supportive approach to home learning. As we do so, we are keen to ensure that we are providing a broad range of learning experiences, and the possibility for structure and rhythm. We recognise that this may be a difficult balance to find but it is certainly our intention. Please maintain open lines of communication and feedback with your child(ren)'s teacher, and feel free to contact me (sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk) should you like to discuss anything further.

Google Classroom

To help facilitate your child's home learning we will be using Google Classroom from the start of the summer term. Google Classroom is a web-based learning environment. When logged into Google Classroom, pupils can collaborate with their peers and teachers. Google Classroom offers a digital safe space for pupils (or parents on their behalf) to view class announcements, communicate with teachers and classmates, access posted lesson content, view work that the teacher has set, and turn in completed work. Only authorised Cambridge Steiner School (CSS) users (pupils, teachers, and other designated staff members) can have access to a CSS Google Classroom. Google users outside the CSS network are not granted permission to any CSS Classroom. With your permission (see Consent Form attached) a secure G-Suite login will be created for each pupil which will allow access to Google Classroom. For children in Class 5 and under the login details will be shared exclusively with parents (it would be at your own discretion to share this with your child). All parents, and pupils in Class 6 and 7, will be asked to read and sign our Acceptable Use Agreement (attached).

So rather than teachers continuing to use email to send out home learning resources, they will upload everything to Google Classroom, and any completed work can then be shared here too. This should help to keep things organised and ensure clarity, as well as allowing for subject teachers to maintain contact. It will also help to ensure that each family can find their own structure and rhythm of home learning, accessing resources at a time that best suits you.

Please note: we do not anticipate children needing to spend any significant amount of time in front of a screen.

Your teachers will ensure that you receive your logins along with clear instructions on how to access Google Classroom before the start of the new term on April 20th. If you require any additional support then you can contact John on: john@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk.

Home Learning Content

We have carefully weighed up the feedback we have received from families, and the discussions, research and sharing of ideas amongst colleagues, to agree upon a way that will best serve our pupils. We are, however, committed to continued review and development and it may be that we adapt and change things as time goes on. We also recognise that, as with any new venture, we may experience teething problems and we ask you for your patience and support here.

Where possible teachers will outline a rough plan for each week, and content will be uploaded to Google Classroom. The content will cover a whole range of learning experiences and will include input from our subject teachers. We would like to use this time to encourage our pupils to develop their capacity for independent learning, and where possible teachers will propose open ended activities that call for independent working and creative thinking. By slowing things down and encouraging self-discovery we hope to help create richer learning experiences. There will be other things that will require some daily practice, which the children (particularly in the older classes) should be able to take ownership of.

As well as written or pictorial documents to share (which could be printed if you have that facility), the teachers will, where appropriate, create short audio or video clips to share with the class, for example, to help introduce a new recorder piece, a song with actions, or instructions of how to do something. We will aim to keep these coordinated so as not to create a sense of overload.

As mentioned, Google Classroom allows for completed work to be uploaded. The idea here is very much about connection i.e. pupils being able to share what they have been doing with their teachers, to receive feedback and any necessary support.

As we all begin to use this platform, things are likely to develop and evolve. Any feedback or ideas are always welcome.

Can I also just take this opportunity to encourage you to read with your children, and to listen to them read. This is so important. Thank you. If you need any guidance on what books you could be reading, please do ask your class teacher.

Communication

Parents can continue to contact their class teacher using email for general correspondence.

Class teachers will continue to schedule regular check ins with each family, this will predominantly be by phone or email. We want to do all we can to help support you as parents during this time. Please note, parental consent is required for teachers to speak with your child

on the phone, and we ask that you remain present in the room with your child for the duration of the call. Thank you.

With a focus on maintaining class connection our teachers plan to trial a regular 'check-in/sharing time' on Zoom for the whole class. This will take a slightly different format across the classes, and class teachers will be in touch with more details.

We also ask that you consider phone calls and letters as other means by which the children might keep in touch with their classmates. Also lighting a candle each day (this could be coordinated) and keeping a diary (this could be a picture diary) might help to keep that connection living.

Many individuals, our teachers included, will be working flexibly during this period to fit with family commitments. Please support our teachers by using agreed lines of communication and respecting boundaries in terms of the frequency and timing of communication. To help support this, teachers will offer surgery hours during which they will be available for contact and to offer support.

As we head into the Easter break, please bear in mind that our teachers will not be expected to continue contact or provide lesson material for the holiday period. They will need time to focus on their planning for the summer term, and of course, to slow down, recharge and spend time with their families.

E-Safety and IT support

As shared in our previous letter, we are conscious of the risks attendant on entering the virtual environment, and we would like to work in partnership with you to help to mitigate these risks for the children. The way in which learning materials will be provided on Google Classroom will allow families to manage your own child(ren)'s access. If your child will be using digital devices themselves then we strongly encourage you to ensure that secure parental controls are in place.

These are the links from NSPCC that we recently shared in the newsletter for helping to keep children safe online:

- [Parental Controls](#)
- [Talking to your Child about Online Safety](#)
- [Inappropriate or Explicit Content](#)

And here are some other links provided by our colleagues at Cambridgeshire County Council:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

Our IT specialist John Timperio has offered to help families set up parental controls for a small fee, please contact him directly to arrange this: john@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk

See also our Virtual Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure (attached).

SEND - support for individuals

Kelly Scott has resumed the role of Acting SENCo and will be working closely with the teachers to help those children (and families) in need of additional support. Please speak with your class teacher in the first instance if you have any concerns about your child's learning.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update. This continues to be an extremely difficult time for us all and every family will be trying to find their own way through. We are here to support you as best we can. Please see below an exciting opportunity to join with parents and educators across the world for an interactive series titled:

Education Reimagined: Supporting Parents, Children & Educators In This Time Of Covid-19, along with a 'Parent Handout' with further ideas to support home learning. The Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship is also preparing a parent briefing that we will circulate in due course.

May you all stay safe and well.

Best wishes,

Sarah Fox

On behalf of the Lower School Team

Education Reimagined: Supporting Parents, Children & Educators In This Time Of Covid-19

Practical & philosophical perspective with an opportunity for live Q&A in a series of 5 online sessions reaching a global audience.

🌐 What's it like for you as a family, juggling working from home and having your children home too in these times of global lockdown, quarantine, and self-isolation?

🌐 What are the inner attitudes that can best support you all to thrive at this time?

🌐 What practical steps need to be in place so that our children are happily engaged with learning, albeit now from home?

🌐 What are lockdown friendly ways of being active?

🌐 How can we support our emotional wellbeing during this time?

What does the future hold for education in the light of Covid-19?

Dates: THURSDAYS from 2nd April - 30th April at 7pm BST (London)

You don't need us to tell you that we're living in extraordinary times.

But as parents, children & educators, how can we best navigate the shifting landscape of today?

We know you're doing your best, but the sudden change to work remotely for so many and the demands of supporting our children indefinitely at home throws up a lot of challenges.

Join Torin Finser PhD and Priya Mahtani for a 5-week series of nourishing conversations where together we will discuss all this and so much more.

To find out more visit our website with all the details. To book individual sessions please visit our website: <https://www.schoolofsophia.org/covid19>

Contribution: £37 for all 5 sessions; £11 drop in for any session. You can attend any session you choose.

However, Session 1 is a little longer than the follow-up sessions as it includes a 1-hour interview with Torin & Priya before a live Q&A afterward (30 mins).

Sessions 2-5 are 1 hour in length and will be largely interactive with plenty of space for your contributions, questions, and reflections.

Let's come together as a global community for the good of childhood.

**PARENT HANDOUT - Ideas to support home learning
(please take what works for you and ignore what doesn't!)**

Be realistic about what you can do:

- ❖ **You're not expected to become teachers** and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply **providing your children with some structure** at home will help them to adapt. Use the tips below to help you make this work for your household
- ❖ **Experiment** and then **take stock**. What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too
- ❖ **Share the load if there are 2 parents at home**. Split the day into 2-3 hour slots and take turns so you can do your own work
- ❖ Take into account your **own family situation**; avoid making comparisons with what other families are doing
- ❖ **Take care of your own health and wellbeing**. This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle. If you are feeling anxious about Coronavirus or need practical advice/support on day-to-day matters please seek support. Useful links: [NHS Every Mind Matters](#); [Coronxiety Support and Resources](#)

Find your own rhythm:

- ❖ **Create and stick to a routine** if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!
- ❖ **Involve your children in setting a daily or weekly schedule** where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership
- ❖ **Schedules can be flexible** - If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible
- ❖ **Designate a working space if possible**, and have a clear cut-off to signal 'school time' is over
- ❖ **Consider sticking the schedule up on the wall** so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day
- ❖ **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends**, to separate school life and home life

Make time for exercise and breaks throughout the day:

- ❖ **Start each morning with something active** (skipping is great or an obstacle course)
- ❖ If you have a **garden, use it regularly**. If you don't, try to get out **once a day** as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 metres apart from others)
- ❖ Get your children to **write in a diary what they did each day** – this can be a clear sign that the 'school' day has ended

Other activities to keep children engaged throughout the day:

- ❖ Ask your children to **write postcards** to their grandparents or to classmates
- ❖ **Get them involved in activities and chores** around the house so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home
- ❖ Ask them to **help you cook** and bake
- ❖ Create space for **free play**
- ❖ Play **board games**
- ❖ Do some **junk modelling** (collect and recycle materials such as used yoghurt pots or tubs and boxes and see what you can make with them)
- ❖ Siblings can **read** to one another, or you could ask grandparents to listen to your children read on FaceTime (or ask grandparents to read to younger children)
- ❖ Don't be afraid to let your children **get bored** and see what creative ideas of their own they come up with...