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Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to say what a fantastic job you are doing! I've been looking at the work coming through on Seesaw and there is some really impressive work coming in. We have a few online engagement prizes to give away this week as a gesture of recognition for hard work in hard times.

I have been looking into some research to try to help anyone finding it tricky to keep children engaged at home. I have been teaching for over 20 years but I'm fully aware that teaching my own children at home is not as easy as being in the classroom environment. Young children will be finding it very hard to understand why their learning is happening at home now. The following tips are aimed to support home schooling and may be of some interest if you are finding things tricky.

#### 1. Put your own oxygen mask on first

Acknowledge that a worldwide pandemic will be having an emotional impact on you too (let alone the children). Sometimes you will need to cry/scream/sleep yourself, don't be too hard on yourself. Many people do find routines helpful - so maybe it's a case of developing a different routine that works for you.

That's why you need to put your own oxygen mask on first. Remember: happy teachers/carers = happy children.

What are your own expectations of yourself around home schooling?

If you hate maths, then don't set yourself up with three hours every

morning: it's unrealistic and you will fail. Instead, find a way that will work for you. Maybe this is the lesson where your child becomes the teacher? Join the Teams or Zoom link and let the teacher support with lessons you don't feel confident with.

## 2. Safety first (learning second)

Many children need a certain environment to feel safe. Consider how you can create a safe learning environment within the household.

When children are going to school, they put on their uniform, they have a journey - which all signals you're in a learning space now, expectations are different to at home, get ready to learn. Without these signals children may resist you being their 'teacher' and home being their 'school.'

Create or re-establish a calm learning space - somewhere that is calm, familiar, consistent. It could be a 'school area' in your house, or prop/s that signify school has started. For example, depending on the age of the child, it could be a special table cloth for the kitchen table when it's school, or a phones-in-the-box-during-lesson-time routine. It might sound crazy but even taking a little register - something to set up 'school time'.

## 3. School expectations

Teachers should be letting you know which tasks are essential to prevent gaps in learning. If you feel there is either too much or too little - discuss this with the school. We really do want to help you get through this!

## 4. Connection

Who is your immediate day-to-day support? Do you have a network of others in similar positions?

You cannot visit other people but you can arrange regular contact time with your network - you're not alone in this. Other parents and carers will have specific challenges. Speaking to others regularly who are experiencing similar situations will give you ideas, support and a place to share. Our Parent Support Advisors (Kat and Stacey) are in school and can offer help if you need it.

Just a reminder that next week (wc 15th February) is half term. I hope that you all have a good break.

Yours in partnership

Mrs Fletcher