



### **The development of home learning at Copnor Primary School during the pandemic.**

Following conversations with teachers in the school and other schools, other stakeholders, parents and children, it is clear that the Covid-related need for many pupils to isolate at home resulted in significantly different outcomes for children, irrespective of geography or socio-economic background. While some schools only concentrated on those in class, we aimed to support those at home, using a hybrid teaching process.

In the Autumn Term of 2020, following an audit of staff capabilities and computing technology available, it became clear that the teaching staff were not prepared for the use of technology to support children at home if there were a need for another lockdown. Therefore, the decision was taken to devote an INSET to Google Classroom and how to use it in order to support the children were they to be at home. It also allowed for teachers -who were required to isolate at home - to continue to teach the children from home.

The decision was also made not to close classes. The expectation was that there would be 23 classes all completing a hybrid lesson strategy: the children being taught at the same time, both at home and school on a daily basis. The aim was to improve the experience for those at home without compromising the experience for those physically in the classroom. This was a fundamentally different approach to that from the first lockdown. During this initial lockdown in March 2020, the work was posted on the website but there was no whole class teaching. Indeed, the children who were in school had been placed in mixed age classes and so teachers were not teaching the children they had taught previously in many cases. While there had been a number of advantages to this strategy (not least the fact that the staff's exposure to risk at the start of the pandemic had been significantly reduced) it was a strategy the senior leadership team did not wish to repeat in future lockdowns.

Therefore, instead, live lessons were shared with the online community. The children at home, where it was possible, were on the interactive whiteboard's screen and were able to interact with the children in class. The teachers shared the resources on the screen and also via the use of the visualisers. Questioning was split between those at home and those at school. The children at home were able to ask for support and used their cameras in order to show their work to the teachers where this was needed. While pre-prepared resources (such as Oak Academy) were looked at, the teaching staff preferred to teach online wherever possible. It was made clear to the teachers that their priority should always be those in the classroom but that they would need to modify their delivery sufficiently to enable those at home to have the best experience possible with the resources provided to them. In the afternoons, the lessons were not live. They were either recorded beforehand or there was an introduction followed by the children completing the activity offline.

This enabled, as examples, additional resources to be made or the marking of the home packs (with hybrid learning making an impact on the workload of the teachers in particular) and providing support for the children in school. It was also felt important that it was the class teacher on screen. The higher level teaching assistants and teaching assistants supported the children but did not take lessons. Where teachers were absent, the lessons were streamed into the class from another class in the year group. To support the home learning, packs were delivered to children. The packs were linked to the work being undertaken in class that week. These packs were then collected on a weekly basis. Some of the families chose to use these packs instead of being online due to a limited amount of IT equipment available at home. Wherever possible, the school mitigated this through the provision of IT equipment, including the release of school laptops above and beyond those provided

by the government. Other families wanted the packs as they did not have the facility to print out the resources. Learning from this experience has led to the reduction in the number of resources required for home learning (and within school). It also led to the removal of the challenges. Many lessons had 3 or more worksheets for the children, of which they may only complete one in the lesson. An important area of the support at home, involved providing regular opportunities for the class to spend time within the PSHE lessons to talk to each other. These part of the lesson were not structured around a lesson outcome but were deemed vital to both the children at home and also the children at school.

The community feel of each class was supported as a result of these sessions and they supported the mental health and well-being of the children at home in particular. The senior leadership team were able to monitor lessons via watching the videos after they were downloaded. Support was provided to the teachers about the lessons, for example, with regards to how to improve the oral and visual quality of the broadcasts for the children at home. The teachers also evaluated their own lessons and were able to adjust their teaching to reflect the reflections made by themselves and by others. Behaviour online, as a whole, was very good. Where there was a need to deal with negative behaviour, the involvement of parents/carers was utilised to support and behaviour returned to normal.

Safeguarding was a vital part of the hybrid approach. An Excel register was kept, identifying any children that we had not seen or heard on the online lessons. Where packs were delivered to these children, the people delivering the packs spoke to the children. Where there was no contact, a member of staff attended the address, with any children who the school deemed to be vulnerable visited by a member of the senior leadership team or welfare officer. These meetings were then followed up, with families being encouraged to join the online lessons and support provided (including children attending in school) where required. Children who were not seen were followed up with further visits until the school had contact with every child. In some cases, the teachers identified potential child protection concerns via the online lessons. These were investigated by a member of the senior leadership team in person and actions were enacted to effectively support the children. In conclusion, a number of lessons have been learnt from the requirement to complete hybrid learning and has upskilled the staff as well as the children who completed their lessons at home online.

Were there to be another lockdown (with school wide or more localised -such as a class or year group) then the school would be prepared to be able to teach online. The streamlining of the amount of worksheets has improved since the Lockdown in January 2021 so there would be less work to be photocopied. There is a significant increase in the amount of computing equipment available to send home were there to be a need to do so. This would help to support families where multiple users are attempting to use a limited number of devices but the families are not pupil premium families and so were unlikely to have received additional devices. Timetabling across the school would also be more closely monitored. This is because there was a realisation that some families had two or more children who needed support online but the parent/carers was unable to do this at the same time (particularly with regards to families with two or more children in EYFS/KS1). The insistence on all classes being online would be something that would be maintained as this definitely helped when the children returned to class. Indeed, it was the children who were already in school who struggled the most when the classes returned to full strength, with the noise and bustle of a typical classroom taking time for a minority of them to adjust to.