



St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

Recovery Statement September 2020

Recovering:

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis and particularly during the latter weeks of lockdown, there has been much talk and a substantial amount of web activity and information as to how schools can best support pupils to 'recover' following the period of non-attendance at school and 'lost time' in teaching, learning and support for their wellbeing.

Emerging from the varied research projects and theories is the suggestion of a dedicated period where pupils can be supported through a bespoke 'Recovery Curriculum'. The intentions of this are to support and address the range of issues around coming face-to-face, and to terms with, the (thus far) events and consequences of this pandemic.

We recognise that any missed academic opportunities are far from the full story of our children's and families' experiences. There have been some momentous moments in lockdown that cannot be ignored. The significant sense of loss has hit many hard – loss of structure, familiar routines, friendships, social interaction, freedom, opportunities and, for some, loss of family or friends have all had an impact, individually or collectively, on the mental health of our school community.

These issues have been at the forefront of our school's response and actions over the past six months and have driven our learning, teaching, welfare, and safeguarding strategies. In short, we have striven to keep our pupils and their families safe and strong. Academic learning stood firmly alongside skill-building and adjustment support to help them weave their way through these strange and unsettling times. 'Recovery' provision started on Day 1 of lockdown and continues.

September 2020:

When school re-opened in September, the lockdown process had allowed us the opportunity to explore, fine-tune and play with our planning for our pupils' learning and wellbeing.

The DfE published their guidance for the full opening of schools (updated 10 September 2020)-

In relation to pupils' wellbeing and support, the guidance states:

Pupils may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. This may particularly be the case for vulnerable

children, including those with a social worker and young carers. **It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation.** Some may need support to re-adjust to school, others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return, a few may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. Others will not be experiencing any challenges and will be keen and ready to return to school. The return to school allows social interaction with peers, carers and teachers, which benefits wellbeing.

We know that, on return to school, our children continue to be vulnerable, their mental health fragile and the witnessing of any adult anxiety will only serve to impact on their wellbeing. We are continually developing and tweaking our approaches with careful thought, clear determination and focused conversations.

We are aware of the frenzy of media comments, reports, blogs etc, that speak volubly of fall-back, missing education, catch-up, etc. But we also believe it is vital not to instill panic in our children and at all costs, avoid them feeling that they are in any way 'behind'.

But this has been a shared experience on a global scale and everyone will have a story to tell – some worrying, heartfelt, sad, others joyful or funny. There is no expectation for all to share with others but there is a clear expectation that we listen to those who choose to recount their experiences; watch closely for those who may suffer in silence and support them wholeheartedly through planning and providing the space for holistic recovery.

Curriculum:

DfE guidance clearly maps out national expectations, stressing that *education is not optional* and that the curriculum should *remain broad and ambitious*. It does not, however, appear to demand a re-write of the school's current curriculum –

Prioritisation within subjects of the most important components for progression is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which pupils may struggle to pick up again later. In particular, schools may consider how all subjects can contribute to the filling of gaps in core knowledge, for example through an emphasis on reading.

At St Vincent's we strongly believe that the key to getting pupils' education back on track over the new academic year will be working with them sensitively through calm, focused teaching, prioritising the most fundamental threshold concepts to develop and reinforce key knowledge and ideas. Not knowing all the small details will not hold them back. Indeed, this approach will increase pupils' confidence and ensure new learning can be built on firm foundations.

Bespoke additional elements to our curriculum will ensure appropriate support is in place to provide the emotional and academic guidance needed for our pupils. These include using a

selection of key texts in our English lessons, beginning with a whole school shared text based around Oliver Jeffer's 'Here We Are'. Through this approach we hope to embed a sense of community across the school; combine pastoral and academic expectations; help teachers and children reflect on the last academic year and the whole school to look forward to the future in a positive way.

The future:

We aim for our children to **be happy; love learning; pursue possibilities.**

We want no limits to their ambitions and their efforts to embody our core values of –

- Self-belief
- Self-worth
- Cooperation
- Resilience
- Independence
- Courage
- Kindness and respect
- Sense of community

Our curriculum will continue to promote curiosity and a love and thirst for learning. Our school Mission is fluid and ambitious and empowers our children to become independent and confident learners, striving for excellence and the highest of aspirations.

The continued emotional and mental health of our pupils is our main priority at this time. Investing in this now will support our children in all areas, helping them to work through the here and now and equip them for what appear to be some inevitable recurrences.

In this way, by investing time in, and for, the whole school community at the start of the return to school – through story-telling, speaking and being heard and wrapping things up as a collective – we acknowledge what has happened, good and bad and can draw out the most positive aspect of all: that it is so good to be back together. Hopeful, not helpless.

Mary Myatt (2020)