



Dear parents and carers,

Home learning at Quality First Education (Q1E): Teaching and learning strategy during the coronavirus pandemic lock down

The Q1E home learning strategy is constantly evolving and developing as we work to improve the provision we offer the (almost 2000) children we serve.

The four schools within the Q1E trust have their own specific characteristics. We refer to our approach as united and unique. This letter outlines the united elements of the trust approach. Where there are school based unique elements, your head teacher will inform you at school level.

As we write this description we are aware that further exploration and piloting are happening within the trust. We are in liaison with schools and leading educational organisations across the United Kingdom and around the world and we await future government guidance and decisions.

Our current provision is based upon the approach we call:

- We share
- We talk
- You share

Each element of the process is key to its success. We are also aware that we all wish for a return to normality. We are used to a style of education that has existed for many years with a teacher and a class in a school. While the approach may have adapted over time, three of the four trust school buildings are a century or so old.

The Q1E home learning approach

We share:

From before the lockdown was implemented, our central team and school-based colleagues worked to develop high quality learning resources for your children to access at home. The first phase of this was to produce revision material, the second phase holiday work and the third (since week two of the summer term), new learning. This is labour-intensive work and most of our teachers are involved in generating material. For example, there are 26 people involved in the weekly maths programme. All of this work follows an overall structure and is matched to the equivalent of five sessions for each child in each year group. We also have adapted the material on the Q1E home learning website for those who need this, such as additional work being provided for particular children. The work includes staff reading stories, demonstrating approaches and explaining activities. It is also accompanied by subject specific guidance on how best to achieve the learning.

The content developed has layers of quality assurance and is highly regarded, with many other schools and individuals now following it. I believe over 15,000 different users have accessed the site. All of the "we share" material is shared on the new Q1E website, brought into operation immediately before the lockdown.

Our strategy is that we will seek to continue to provide this high quality “we share” online provision throughout the summer term. We are aware that some families find accessing material from home a challenge. In this regard, we have loaned out and bought additional devices so that families with no or limited access can have school devices to use at home. We have also purchased Wi-Fi access for some families where this is an issue.

We have adapted the website as the lockdown has progressed. We seek to ensure it is accessible and friendly. Some of the adaptations have been made to the material offered, and some made to the organisation of the site. For example, teachers were asked to produce a brief welcome message: these were produced rapidly by our staff. Staff have made videos reading a variety of books. Some of these stories lie within the planned weekly work and some are placed in the story section for your children to watch and listen to whenever they like. I believe there are over eight hundred prepared and two hundred videos produced by our team on this site. Staff may be at home, but their desire to produce the very best for your children remains at the forefront of their thoughts. They really do miss seeing your children and teaching their classes.

Very importantly every layer of our provision development has backups and reserves. Each role has someone ready to step in, in case one of our teachers becomes ill or unavailable. This has worked seamlessly to date but we have had illness both in our team and within our families and community.

We now have four key elements to our home learning curriculum. These are English, maths, curriculum (all subjects excluding English and maths) and reading. Further guidance on this is provided on the Q1E site. As a guide we are suggesting that the time your child spends on the various online activities should not exceed the following amounts per day:

- English - one hour
- Maths - one hour
- Curriculum - one hour
- Reading - half an hour

We talk:

We have implemented a trust-wide “we talk” strategy. This involves the logic of “every child every week”. We start each week with the target of every class teacher speaking with every child in their class. This can be a challenge as people do not always answer their telephones. We intend to continue this approach throughout the lockdown, but like all our approaches it will be reviewed if and when the government announce changes to the arrangements. In the early wave of these calls, staff asked you about the availability of devices and internet. Where appropriate, this has been followed up by the offer of support. Similarly, where appropriate we have called parents to assist them with accessing the Q1E site and or using the devices shared by their school. An issue with the calls is that our teachers call from a non-disclosed number. As a consequence some families were initially unaware that the caller was their children’s teacher. Teachers have now been advised that if they make three calls to the given number and none are answered, they should pass this information onto the school’s senior team. Similarly, teachers have been advised that the phone calls should last approximately five minutes.

You share:

Throughout the home learning programme, we have been running pilots and trials. These will have affected some of you and not others. During the initial stages of the home learning we ran two trials that have come to fruition. One of these was a trial of “Seesaw”. Our practitioners looked at different platforms and discussed these with other educators. The strong recommendation was that we go with Seesaw. This quickly moved from a trial to a decision. After a week of staff training, the Seesaw approach was rolled out across the whole trust the following week. Last week was the first full week using Seesaw and we review the effectiveness each day. Following a further review of how the three

elements of our strategy are working we made some adjustments that I mentioned in my video message and are now on the website.

For example, we now have a frequently asked question section and a designated email for each school, so parents can ask school-based questions directly to the senior staff of their school. This also means Seesaw and the weekly phone call can be focused on what they were created for: to support your children and their learning.

Real time teaching:

A few parents have asked about live lessons. This approach is not widely used in state Primary schools. We have considered this approach since before the lockdown and will continue to consider it. It is being used at a small scale where we feel it best meets the needs of specific children.

The current priority of our staff team is to prepare the work for every child's home learning for the coming weeks. Most teachers are involved in this process, aiming to prepare each week's material by the end of the previous Wednesday, so that it can be quality assured, adapted and then uploaded for Friday. Teachers are also expected to contact their children every week and where possible, respond to Seesaw daily. We continue with staff training, safeguarding updates, etc each week.

Having used zoom or the equivalent regularly for a long period and having used it for meetings of all sizes, including for 170 staff, we know it has limitations. We are also aware that many of our staff and families would find it difficult to create a suitable, uninterrupted learning space for a prolonged period. Having looked at the evidence of the number of children in each family, the number of devices our families have and the high percentage who share a device, a real time approach to home learning would not work for many families.

The scale is very significant. For any real time interaction we have to have at least two employees in the activity. We have approximately 75 classes in the trust. If we were to try and provide the four daily activities in real time, then the equation is $2 \times 75 \times 4 \times 5$ each week – without taking account of issues such as staff absence, unavailability, staff who do not have access to an available space at all, or do not have this for all four sessions a day. Also very importantly, if staff are real time teaching, then they cannot plan and prepare the high quality material which is absolutely essential to the Q1E approach.

We continue to look at options and where appropriate we are exploring with pilots.

Differentiated provision: An overview of Quality First Education

At Q1E we have a relentless drive to provide a quality first education suitable for all children, all of the time. We are aware that despite our best efforts there are some children who need more or an adapted provision. There are also a few who need a more specific provision tailored to their individual needs. We call this our "All, Some, Few" approach. This approach is also mirrored in our home learning approach. The first line of what we do is aimed at being a high quality, consistent approach for all children. This includes the website, a weekly phone conversation and the use of Seesaw. For some children we have separate work on the website and for some we arrange more tailored calls more often, from different people known to the children. For a few children and families, we have a personally tailored provision and the interaction is directly with the family.

Thank you for your continued support. We, like you, want the very best for your children.

Yours,

John Grove