

Routes to Recovery



We're not in recovery yet because we're still in a state of uncertainty, with the priority to stay safe and keep the children who do come into school happily occupied. Recovery won't begin until we have whole, or half, classes together, social distancing is relaxed and hygiene rules are firmly embedded.

Full recovery will be a long slow journey and will not be achieved in a week or even six weeks. On that journey we need to explicitly address the full social and emotional impact of coronavirus on children, teachers and parents, by going forward in constructive, positive, and perhaps new, ways. Anxieties may need to be addressed but in the context of recovery.

Recovery for children

The children may have fallen 'behind' academically but unless we focus as a priority on their social and emotional needs they may never develop their full potential. We must explicitly help them to restore their relationships, re-create positive attitudes and behaviour and re-build their self-confidence and resilience. To do this the school needs a PSE programme that uses interactive and fully inclusive teaching methods. All children must actually **experience** mutual support and respect through interactive PSE work, not just talk about its importance. *'Learning for Living'* uses developmental group work methods specifically devised to improve relationships, attitudes and behaviour and it will help teachers to address motivational issues, such as attitudes towards work. The first module focuses on establishing mutually supportive relationships within the class and the second module, relationships within the school. This module will be particularly uplifting for the whole-school ethos. Subsequent modules on health, family and friendship, use the same inclusive techniques to deliver the PSE curriculum and continue the recovery. See www.learning4living.org.uk

Children have experienced the anxiety of their parents, as well as feeling the loss of social interaction. The tone of the interactive work should not dwell on anxiety or fear or loss of freedom. Instead it should re-construct positive interaction and place these extreme feelings in the range we all experience. The topic of bereavement is covered for older children. There may be, however, some children who have experienced the illness of family or friends or bereavement, and they may need to express their anxiety in a personalised way, with one to one support, either from within the school or from the range of professional support available for children. Others may need the additional support of a calming, small group, away from the whole class, revisiting the work of *'Learning for Living'*.

Recovery for staff

The well-being of all the staff in the school is paramount and must be addressed explicitly. It should not be left to individuals to find their own way through. The support that people have outside school will vary considerably and invariably school staff are support providers for others. As tip-top frontline professionals/key workers they put others and the job first. It will be important to provide staff with a range of well-being ideas to adopt individually and let them know of local support organisations such as Occupational Health Departments.



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However, re-establishing mutual support between all the staff will be crucial to their recovery and needs to be addressed explicitly. Having worked with staff groups to restore morale, my contribution in this area will be a Programme for a Staff Support Group, for the recovery period.



Recovery for parents

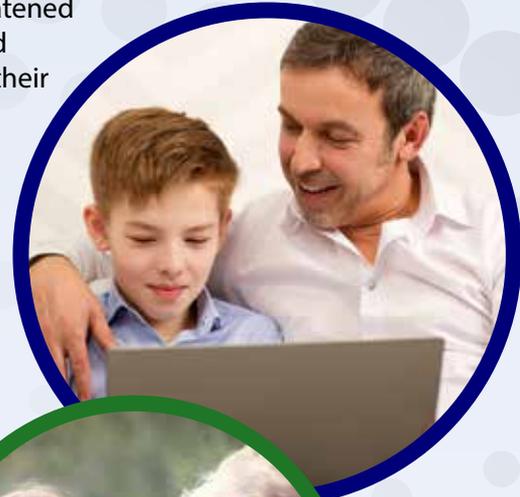
We should not underestimate how challenging the period has been for parents, as many teachers, who are parents, know. The response to home schooling has been understandably mixed and children's experiences will have been very different. These underlying differences potentially will create a gap between the children and this is likely to be manifested in some negative attitudes to work and poor behaviour. Some children will miss the intimacy of home schooling. Some parents have felt threatened by the expectations involved in home schooling and may have conveyed mixed messages about learning. Parents need to know that the school will recognise their child's emotional and social needs on return.

Given that the circumstances of Covid-19 have led to increased involvement in their children's education, we must be careful not to suddenly 'dump' parents, with a message that education is now back in the hands of the professional and their involvement is no longer needed.

It's fortuitous that 'Learning for Living' uses a unique and innovative way of engaging parents throughout. After every lesson they are sent/emailed a letter briefly outlining what has been covered and suggesting some conversations and short activities for parents to explore the topic with their child. Examples are shown on the website – [Find out more](#) takes you to sample pages to download. (www.learning4living.org.uk) There are also some free topics, that use the same approach, in [For Parents](#), to send home whilst work is still being provided for home schooling. Just forward this direct link to parents for them to choose their age and topics: www.learning4living.org.uk/parents/Introduction.pdf

Dr Mary Gurney

Educational Psychologist and author of 'Learning for Living'.
enquiries@learning4living.org.uk



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