

A Virtual Classroom

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My name is Gill and I live in Portslade. On March 17th I was teaching a year 3 maths lesson when my head teacher came and told me that anyone with poor respiratory health was to be sent home. I left after the lesson and from there stayed at home. I had to prepare work for children to send it electronically for them to do, mark it and send it back with any critical things to look at and how to change it. The sad thing about that was there was not any way for me to verbally explain what I wanted them to do or how to make anything easier.



Teaching is a completely different world. Teachers understand how to explain things and children go with that, asking when they are unsure, and the problems are solved. Many of the children didn't do the work because the parents found it quite difficult to understand, especially in Maths. It was like me asking them to get in a car and drive it and they'd never had any driving lessons. Emails were answered immediately as well as parent conferencing and queries asking how to work problems out, there was no let up. We then went into zoom conferencing, not zoom lessons, as the children needed to see a friendly face rather than more work.

At the same time, I was teaching my grandchildren for 3 x 45 minute lessons each day. They found it extremely difficult a lot of the time. They asked: "Why are you torturing us, Nana, you are supposed to be kind to us!" They were quite lethargic and wanted to give up the ghost, but they did plod on - it was a chore to say the least. So I understand how parents felt and I felt very sorry for the parents.

In my school the key worker and vulnerable children returned and were all put in bubbles. The Reception and Year One children came back but no other year groups until September. The persistent effort and achievements with children online have been really brilliant. Some achieved more than I would ever have expected them to. Just to keep going and sending things in from the first to the last day. Of the 30 children in my class, 15 children still managed to keep up with the work. It wasn't easy for lots of my children, many live near the seafront in flats without gardens. It will be so lovely to see them again.

We're going back in bubbles of 30 and not mixing with the other year groups. We will have 15 desks in each room and everyone has to have their temperature taken, desks looking forward, no group work, very alien to what they should be doing. We will eat together, do as much learning outdoors, reading, maths, and try not to cross contaminate with other class bubbles - which is going to be tricky. If anybody has any virus then the whole bubble will have to stay at home for 2 weeks and I'll have to go back to online learning again.

These 6 weeks of no online learning have been the best thing for me, as well as knowing that I'll go back into school. I also had my birthday and that was really lovely, but it was again most strange. Birthdays in lockdown have been strange. The best part was when I could see my extended family again. Not to see my other daughters and grandchildren was very difficult, and to go out for a walk or a family bike ride was great. I had a bike bought for me, and it was so lovely to get the wind in your face.

By Gill, August 2020