

## Build Up, Bounce Back Curriculum

The common thread that runs through the current lived experiences of our children, is **loss**. From loss emanates three significant dynamics that will impact majorly on the mental health of our children. Anxiety, trauma and bereavement are powerful forces. For them all to appear at once in an untimely and unplanned fashion is significant for the developing child. Our children are vulnerable at this time, and their mental-health fragile. And on top of that, they are witnessing a sea of adult anxiety, which they unwittingly are absorbing.

The loss of friendship and social interaction could trigger a bereavement response in some of our children. The rules of the peer group have vanished without warning, and our young people in particular, were ill prepared for this. They will mourn for how their life was compared to how it is now. They have undergone a period where friends and family members have been avoided because they are a threat; how long will it take for children to feel comfortable with human interaction again.

How are our schools to prepare? What teaching methods will facilitate teaching with compassion? All of our learners will need a holistic recovery, some may need a focused recovery intervention programme, personalised to their needs; others may need a deeper and longer lasting recovery period, enabling a fuller exploration of the severity of their trauma.

In response to the amount of loss our young people will have experienced, our build back, bounce back curriculum is built on a systematic, relationships-based approach to reigniting the flame of learning in each child. Many children will return to school disengaged. School may seem irrelevant after a long period of isolation. Our quest, our mission as educators, should be to journey with that child through a process of re-engagement, re-connection, which leads them back to their rightful status as a fully engaged, authentic learner.

Many of us will focus on the recovery of lost knowledge, but this does not recognise the scale of impact. If we consider the definition of a relevant curriculum as the 'daily lived experience' we must plan for experiences that provide the space for recovery. Now is the time to return to more humane approaches concerned with the fundamental wellbeing, and secure positive development of the child. Without this there will be no results that have true meaning and deep personal value to the child in terms of their preparation for adulthood.

The first step to re-engaging our children with their learning is through building on their confidence and capturing their interest with exciting and engaging topics. It will serve no purpose to children or staff to start the next academic year by testing children to find 'gaps' in their learning, or by reminding them of what they have missed. All children learn at different paces and all children have times where they find learning a challenge – this is healthy and staff are well prepared for how to support children during this time. As always we maintain the belief that relationships are at the heart of good teaching. Our absolute priority is to reach out and greet our children in September and to rebuild those strong home-links. Many children have been disconnected from their friends and teachers for five months. Time will be made to listen to children, their experiences and to support them with the transition back into school routines – both pastorally and academically.

The second thing we must do is look carefully at our curriculum and prioritise what children must learn, what skills and knowledge do they need to move forward rapidly? Nobody fully knows how children have been affected by the absence of school routine.

At Leeson we have spent time looking at evidence and research by Mary Myatt and Tom Sherrington, to name a couple. The evidence available suggests children (and parents) are likely to feel anxious about the return and will need support, reassurance and positivity when they come back. Time will be made for children who require additional support and all staff are clear on supporting the re-connection with school whilst maintaining an ambitious curriculum for all our children.

As a positive start in September, staff are already planning lessons which combine pastoral and academic expectations. As a leadership team, it will be our priority to ensure all staff welcome and support children to re-engage with the '20-21 ( Build Back, Bounce Back) Curriculum' around 4 key elements, these are referred to as **The 4R's – Routine, Relationships, Relevance and Reflection**. More on these areas are in the documentation attached below.