

Principal's Message – week ending 07 02 20

Dear Families

How can I help my child do well at school? Part 2

Last week, in Part 1, I suggested that as parents we can do the following 5 things to help our children do well at school (please see the full message from last week if you would like to remind yourself of the detail):

1. Take an interest day-to-day
2. Remind your child regularly that having high attendance matters
3. Aim to create good conditions at home that support your child's good achievement at school
4. Keep in touch with school
5. Do some school-related work regularly with your child

This week, I would like to suggest how you can do number 5, help your child with school-work, as this is often the one where parents feel least able to help: 'I just don't understand the Maths... I can't speak French... My child knows more Physics than I do... There's just no time...' All of these things may well be true; and you may also feel that you don't have a clue about what your child is studying at the moment, so how could you possibly help? Here are 5 specific things you could do:

1. Ask your child to show you one of their exercise books or workbooks. Find something they have recently done and ask a few questions about it. Say your child has done some work in Maths on adding fractions, you could say: 'Here's a question on adding fractions, which I can see you've been doing in Maths. If you add a quarter and a quarter, what do you get?' Assuming they have a go at answering, you could then ask what rule they used to add the two fractions.
2. Even better in some ways is to have revision guides for the subject – Revise Key Stage 3 History/English Language/Music... Revise GCSE Chemistry/French/Geography etc... these days, you can get revision guides for almost everything. Or, you can get free online questions and answers – I prefer the book/paper versions personally, because you can work through them sequentially, whereas online work tends to be piecemeal. The great thing about revision guides is that they usually have examples and answers in them, so it's easier for you to help and harder for your child to get stuck.
3. Do your child's homework with her/him. You might not know the answers, but you can have a go.
4. Get your child to make some Flash-cards and use the Flash-cards to test your child. By Flash-cards, I mean those small, usually rectangular, blank index cards where your child can write a question on one side of the card ('What is erosion?') and the answer on the other ('Erosion is when rocks and soil are worn away by natural forces like water and wind...')
5. Use Doodle as a source of resources to help your child's work at home. If you aren't registered for Doodle, please email Ms Moore on jm@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk and ask her to set you up on Doodle.

I absolutely understand that there are two – at least two! – issues with doing any or all of these things: the first is pressure of time, we are very busy people and it's hard to fit things in; the second is the reluctance of our children to work with us as parents! As a parent with a child in Year 13 and another in Year 11, getting more than a grunt out of them over dinner can, sometimes, seem like a victory in itself! Even if you do a little bit of work occasionally with your child – once a week for 10 minutes, or once a fortnight – **it sends your child the message that you value their education and you're there to help**. Small things, over time, can make a big difference.

Using the Hinchingbrooke car-park

We have had reports of some near-misses at the end of the school day when some parents drive into the school car-park to collect their child, and other reports of people getting 'hot under the collar' because it's congested and getting out of the car-park is hard. It's a large school and the roads around the school were clearly not made to support the number of cars that use them these days, especially at peak times. We would be very grateful if those parents that do use the car-park to drop off and/or pick up their child could do so with the utmost care and courtesy. The last thing we want is an accident or an altercation. Thank you very much.

Kind regards

Mark Patterson
Principal