UCCLE PARENT FEEDBACK
ON NURSERY & PRIMARY DISTANCE LEARNING

Parents from across the nursery and primary at Uccle were solicited for feedback on the post-Toussaint Distance Learning regime. The feedback was given through their APEEE section and class representatives from 26 November to 1 December. The following questions were provided to the section representatives to help structure feedback from class parents:

1. any strengths and weaknesses that parents have identified—and comparisons with spring 2020 programme;
2. the timetable put in place and the balance of courses;
3. clear planning and communication from teachers;
4. use of video conferencing, asynchronous videos or other online resources to teach;
5. amount of screen time as well as autonomous, group or guided work and homework;
6. clear homework assignments and assessment of work completed;
7. provision of educational support;
8. use of different TEAMS modules;
9. roll out of credentials and training of children on TEAMS in advance;
10. netiquette/safety measures.

The APEEE has received the following feedback from seven sections: DA, DE, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT from across different levels. Though we have received a range of opinions (sometimes even contradictory), there are certain issues and requests that have come up repeatedly among several sections and levels and that seemed worth highlighting. We have attempted to collate and summarise feedback below. Some of the topics listed above (3+8; 4+5; 9+10) have been combined in this report for greater clarity.

Any strengths and weaknesses that parents have identified—and comparisons with spring 2020 programme;

- **General:** In general, Distance Learning over Toussaint period was much more well organised than in spring, as the scheduling was clearer and teachers were more available; kids had a daily schedule; video conferences (VC) and homework. Teachers' knowledge of tools also improved. There was strong praise for specific teachers and some thought teachers should be better supported through the provision of devices and materials. Still, it was emphasised that distance learning is not a replacement for in situ learning. In particular the youngest children struggle with instructions given online and inevitably must turn to their parents.
- **Comments:**
  - **Scheduling of compulsory online connections.** It is suggested that the number of compulsory connections for the primary students could be grouped more efficiently, made optional in some cases, or reduced to suit family schedules.
  - **Planning.** All meeting requests and assignments should be sent well in advance and not on the same day. The TEAMS Calendar should be used to schedule lessons. It was appreciated when the resource/material used was indicated in the TEAMS meeting

name. Assignments given through the TEAMS Assignment module were also appreciated. Recurring meetings or assignments and longer-term project-type work are helpful.

- ○ **Resources.** Use of school books would help families without printers and were generally preferable to families over worksheets sent online. Textbooks are also a good offline option during online learning. Early announcement of closures is useful so that children bring their books home. Additional online teaching resources would be appreciated by some where others found that teachers depended too much on educational games sites.
- ○ **Methodology.** The teaching methodology is still not harmonised, and it was particularly difficult to learn new topics. Best practices can be shared among teaching staff to promote common approaches. In general, as focusing on the screen can be difficult for pupils, lessons should be short and interactive and carried out in small groups when possible. The focus should be on interaction rather than tasks, especially for the youngest. Class periods where the teacher is available to answer questions during the homework completion should also be considered.
- ○ **Parent commitment.** Parents have professional obligations and often multiple children which do not allow them to help kids with their studies, monitor their use of the internet, or to support them technically. This can create a lot of stress, particularly for parents with young children. Parents are still compelled to improvise teaching during autonomous work hours, particularly for the younger children. More support for parents and/or an open exchange between class families and the teacher might be helpful.
- ○ **Technology.** Many families do not have additional computer/printing resources available at the necessary hours--especially those with multiple children. Some connection difficulties also experienced both on the pupil's and on the teacher's side.
- ○ **Communication.** Communication channels with parents and pupils and use of TEAMS should be more consistent and harmonised.

The timetable put in place and the balance of courses;

- **General:** In general, the fixed timetable was much preferred to the open-ended arrangement in the spring, and the live L2 classes were particularly appreciated. There was positive feedback on the overall number of live classes per level and the balance between work as a class with group work and individual work. Still, the number of compulsory connections for primary students could be more routine, grouped more efficiently or even reduced to better suit family schedules. Efficiencies could be achieved by better planning and scheduling, e.g. grouping live courses at the beginning of the day and offline/optional live lessons/asynchronous videos in the afternoon and to have the teacher (or a reinforcement teacher) available during hours in which there is no class, so that kids can consult. Better planning using textbooks and shared weekly plans could also facilitate this. Nursery families found it good that kids could connect for 30 minutes with their teacher every morning with an optional connection in the afternoon, 30 minutes to maximum one hour. This was considered generally helpful for working parents and optimal screen time for children of this age.
- **Comments:**
  - ○ **Pauses.** It is important to give short pauses between different class periods.
  - ○ **Daily rhythm.** It was agreed that a daily routine is important for kids and this could be facilitated by a regular schedule. If possible, parents generally prefer a balanced week with more or less the same number of meetings each day, starting at the same time, instead of one day with 2 meetings and the other day 4 meetings.

- Scheduling options. It would be nice if parents could be given the choice of timeslots (when there are two groups) to better facilitate the family schedule.
- **L2.** L2 teaching continues to be an issue in some sections, particularly for younger children who were just beginning. It would require a considerable number of live teaching hours to ensure children can do their homework and their exposure to this language is not disrupted. It is unclear why it is only twice a week.
- **Non-core subjects.** It might be possible to limit religion/morale lessons and European hours to once every 2 weeks; the optional connection for Gym, Arts and Music was generally supported. In general online classes in the afternoon could be difficult as pupils were tired.

Clear planning and communication from teachers; use of TEAMS modules

- **General:** Parents appreciated the overall structure and daily schedule and appreciated that the normal class time was well used and a generally positive experience with communication and planning. Still, there was a request for teachers to circulate weekly plans with clear learning objectives and all assignments for the week (if possible) and to schedule meetings in the Calendar well in advance (latest beginning of the week) to allow families to plan their own schedules. Some parents also preferred a weekly upload of assignments completed as well.
  Beyond this, parents felt that TEAMS was still not used consistently and that there should be fixed channels of communication with both parents and students.
- **Comments:**
  - **Buy-In.** Nursery parents particularly appreciate when teachers consult parents before fixing the plan.
  - **Channels.** To communicate with parents use parents' email addresses (pupils rarely use their own email accounts). To communicate with pupils use only TEAMS.
  - **Use of TEAMS.** There was still inconsistency with the use of TEAMS modules. Meetings should be scheduled in advance through the Calendar; weekly assignments should be given in advance through Assignments or ClassNotebook; and Weekly Schedule can be stored in Files with supporting materials. ClassNotebooks or Files for class lectures or presentations by the teacher. This should be communicated clearly to parents and pupils Better organisation of educational material in TEAMS File folders and sub-folders should be undertaken. For example a main folder for the main language and in this main folder sub-folders for months.
  - **HE communication.** HE teachers should always indicate to which class (P1-P2-P3...) their emails are addressed. For families with more than one child, it is important to know which child.

Use of video conferencing, asynchronous videos or other online resources to teach; amount of screen time as well as autonomous, group or guided work and homework;

- **General:** The use of VC has ensured contact amongst the pupils and between the pupils and their teachers. There have also been good attempts by many teachers to find ways to capture pupils' interest and attention, which should be captured and shared as best practice. For some pupils, this has also been a good opportunity to develop autonomy and learn to work online. Nevertheless, it is felt by some families that there is too much screen time with long, uninterrupted sessions which make it hard for the pupils to focus. The format is

generally more difficult for the youngest pupils and for those who are shy or have difficulties. Pupils often find it difficult to ask for help or guidance and over time may lose enthusiasm for learning. More efficient timetabling with clear breaks between sessions coupled with better advanced planning, including offline work and broader use of textbooks, is generally requested as well as more interactive lessons in smaller groups or even pairs and open-ended support lessons where kids can ask questions.

- **Comment:**
  - ○ **Group size.** In general, small group sizes and even pair work were appreciated by many parents. Some suggested that for smaller children, group sizes should not exceed more than 4-5 pupils if possible.
  - ○ **Interactive and child-centred.** As children have limited ability to focus on the screen, the online sessions should be short and captivating. Interaction with the children should be prioritised over tasks. Activities like games or presentations for older children and reading aloud for younger children were well appreciated during class time. This could be complemented with more open-ended support from teachers while children complete their work. For nursery, some thought that the option of connecting twice a day is good to keep up social interactions--though the second connection should be optional.
  - ○ **Semi-autonomous groups.** L1 time was divided into two parts one for teaching and one for correction of homework. It was suggested that a part dedicated to homework itself could be added as pupils often remain online to work together. This could be treated as small team work driven or supervised by the teacher. Eventually, the same model could be used also for other topics such as DDM or Art.
  - ○ **Project work.** Longer-term project-type work was well received as both captivating for pupils and allowing a flexible home schedule.
  - ○ **Asynchronous videos.** In general asynchronous videos were not used, but parents seemed favourable to them, particularly for those subjects without mandatory live lessons (Art, Music, HE, etc.).
  - ○ **Use of online resources.** While some parents requested more online educational resources, some parents felt that online resources and in particular educational games sites (e.g. https://www.logicieleducatif.fr/) were overused by teachers, and not only increased screen time but could distract pupils from their work. For the latter, screen time was better spent on interaction in the class setting.
  - ○ **HE.** HE teachers should organise VC when possible rather than sending homework by email. Direct contact and clear explanations are important in these classes.
  - ○ **L2.** The learning of L2 requires personal contact and continues to be difficult in an online environment with few hours.

Clear homework assignments and assessment of work completed;

- **General:** Generally positive feedback on homework assignments. In particular, the flexibility shown by teachers has been appreciated. Parents would appreciate that homework is more varied with more thematic content and extension work. Parents also suggested that assignments should be corrected more regularly and feedback on progress given to pupils and families.
- **Comments:**
  - ○ **Optional work.** This was greatly appreciated and teachers should be encouraged to give more optional/extension work.
  - ○ **Variety.** Homework sometimes lacked variety; teachers could make an effort to give a broader array of assignments, creative work, project-type work or even group or pair

assignments. More autonomous thematic work can be given and less rote work which depends on the help of parents.

- ○ **Feedback/Follow-Up:** More consistent correction of homework and general feedback on pupils' progress and achievements would be appreciated.
- ○ **Assignments.** The TEAMS assignments module clearly shows the task to be done and the deadline and was considered easy to use and helpful. This or another written prompt should be used even when the teacher gives the assignment orally. Assignments should be given well in advance to allow good planning of each week.
- ○ **Resources.** Families generally prefer to follow textbooks for core subjects but work can be extended based with thematic dossiers and additional online teaching resources. Educational game sites were less appreciated as they increased screen time.

Provision of educational support;

- **General:** There was not much comment on this, but in general it was felt that teachers were available and time set aside for questions. Formal educational support was deemed not sufficient for at-home teaching and learning. It was requested by one family that DL recommendations be included in IEPs and that catch-up plans for SEN students are produced and shared with parents.

Roll out of credentials and training of children on TEAMS in advance; NEtiquette/safety measures.

- **General:** There were few remarks on the guidance given to pupils on TEAMS and only a few problems with credentials. In general, parent guidance could be helpful to overcome technical obstacles and put in place good learning practices at home. In some instances the expectations of pupils (e.g. uploading their assignments) seemed high relative to their age. There were some reports of teachers struggling with certain functionality as well. With regards to NEtiquette, the new ICT Charter is a good start, but the situation can still be improved. While some pupils may be young for NEtiquette training, it might be helpful for older pupils and parents.
- **Comments:**
  - ○ **Chat in class.** Chat and pop-up messages can distract children from online lessons. We should look into disabling messaging during VC classes as it distracts pupils.
  - ○ **After hours use.** Many pupils also remain on TEAMS after lessons sending chat messages and making calls. Even those who undertake research for class may easily wonder off topic. It is difficult to monitor them.
  - ○ **Parent guide:** It could make sense to have a general guide for parents – "how to support your child in distance learning", treating the balance in helping, supporting, feeling the need to "be the teacher" and still do work at the same time. This could include general TEAMS and online safety advice as well.