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Headteacher: Mr Denis Foster MSc PGCE

Headteacher's weekly newsletter (N°25) an extra-ordinary one!
20th March 2020

I have been a teacher for a long time and never experienced a week like this one. I watched the numbers of children attending the school fall from the typical 15 to 43, 60, 80, 105 and 123 between Monday and Friday and today we close until further notice for most of the children. As a representative cross-section of society, we have also had adults absent as well as self-isolation and vulnerable started to impact on the staff.

The information from the Government is clear that we need to self-isolate or practice social distancing. Many parents working in critical sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. "Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be." The Government have defined critical workers and asked schools, if they can, to provide emergency child care. Schools have also been asked to provide care for children that have an EHCP and/or a social worker. I have also been asked to provide food for children eligible for a free school meal. I have emailed parents requesting information so that we can plan to do these things. The staff have been brilliant and I hope to be able to do all of the things the government have asked. There are still parents and carers that need to reply because they have one or more key workers in the family or are eligible for a free school meal. Please respond before 7pm tonight. I can then send information to the appropriate parents and carers with details about the arrangements. This is more likely to happen over the weekend.

The majority of children will be at home from Monday and the teachers have prepared work for them. It should last at least two weeks. They are now preparing materials for April and beyond if necessary. The work can be accessed from the website. The web page is called 'Closure Work'. There will be links to it on the home page and from the 'For Parents' tab. The page will be live this evening. There is flexibility for children to drop down a year if they wish or try a year above if they want to be stretched. There are also contact numbers for you to call for ELSA support or the school office. **Please read the information carefully and call at the designated times.** It is likely to be very busy on Monday so please be patient. Teachers also hope to contact the children in their class… I am not able to make a guarantee but they will try their best.

We have sent login details home either as a paper copy or in an email. If you haven't received it, please call the school. Remember that in addition to the work set, MyMaths, Bug Club, Purple Mash and TT Rock Stars can also be accessed with the logins.

Today we have provided the children at school with a letter (also attached within this parentMail communication) for you to read to them, which explains the national situation in a child friendly way. Please take the time to share this with your child.

The Yr5 Rushall Farm visit has been cancelled. We are investigating the most effective way of refunding you. This will be covered in Governmental guidance. The school has already transferred your monies to Rushall Farm. Please do not call the office until I write to you in due course.

In view of the current situation, please do not pay the final payment for the Yr5 Swanage residential visit. Currently, this trip is still planned to go ahead.

The Yr6 PGL residential visit to the Isle of Wight is still planned because PGL are still operating. We will inform you when we know more. Again, please do not call the office until I write to you in due course.

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We have tried to get PE kits etc. home. Those that are still here from children absent will be kept safe. We will empty any lunch boxes left in school and wash them ready for collection when we return.

The school still holds some controlled medication and inhalers. Please collect them as soon as possible.

I have sent you all two key documents; it is important that we all read them:

1. Closure of educational settings: information for parents and carers

2. Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining educational provision

Like you, I sincerely hope that this challenging time will not be prolonged. This is a time to consider our family and friends, and remember the importance of following the Government's advice for all of us to socially distance ourselves to reduce the pressures of the Health Service, stop the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and ultimately save lives across our community and country.

I wish you all well during this unprecedented period in our lives and most importantly please keep yourselves, your children and your family safe.

Warmest regards from at least a 2m distance!

Denis Foster (Headteacher)