

7th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope we are all keeping safe and well during these strange times. I am sure the weather is making it better for some, but for those fighting the disease, it is an exhausting experience.

From a school point of view, I thought it would be useful just to share a few bits of information. With so much uncertainty in the world at the moment, we are very careful about making decisions that may have to change or be amended. Clearly, we are all managing this in the best way that we can with so many stresses and strains on each and every house. I cannot make final decisions on many things at the moment, but if we share what we are thinking, it can allow you to ask questions and then have discussions with your children.

Bank Holiday

Whilst our childcare provision is open to those that need it, we will not be expecting students to complete work on Friday 8th May, as this was designated a bank holiday to mark VE Day celebrations. It may be that some tasks still appear in timelines, but we will not be asking staff to monitor their accounts on this day. I hope you are able to find time to spend together as a family on this day.

Schools Opening

The speculation around opening schools has increased recently. We have had no information officially, therefore need to be very careful about making any panic or stress worse. As I have mentioned previously, we would expect there to be a government announcement, which will then give advice/direction to schools. However, the decision about how and when we then open will be SCHOOL based. Therefore, when all relevant risks are assessed, we will contact all parents via letter and email, as well as posting updates on our website.

As part of our preparation for opening, we would like to gather some views from parents. There are some general worries we will all have (i.e how will we social distance?) which we can answer when we know the government plans. However, there may also be many things that are a concern that we don't even know about yet (i.e how will we buy school uniform?) Please take time to fill in the form found here:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hmpYW-bEmU2DF5CfHJ74qvNKWPIDaf1Dm_HkaYnguH9UMEFaQzhaWDZDS0dBTVBKVkk2N0VTQVE4WS4u

Online Learning

We are continuing to use SMHW as the main portal for our online learning. We are aware of some issues, but the engagement has been excellent and the way families have used the resources is brilliant. We have shared details of how we wanted children to approach this work from the very start and have hopefully responded each time an issue has arisen (too many notifications being a key one!) We continue to push the idea of reading and then talking about it afterwards as we know this has an enormous impact on our ability to learn. We are constantly reviewing our processes and are experimenting with some video based technology. However, we are unlikely to move to "live" lessons at the moment. As the situation around being closed continues, we will revisit this, but we do not expect a change in approach in the next few weeks.

Keeping Online Learning Going!

Something we have all realised is that online and computer based learning will be more of a part of our daily work in the future. If we do open to some students/groups, then others will continue to be taught remotely. We are so proud of how many students have completed their work online (currently DOUBLE the national average!) but would ask that we harness this change in behaviour so that we can benefit from it in the future. Again, as time goes by we will seek some views from parents and students about this period, so that we can refine and use to help us use the SMHW and online packages to support even better learning.

Progress Worries

All families will be concerned that the interruption to school will impact their child's learning. Whilst there will be challenges for us to address and learning gaps to be filled, I must ask that we maintain the position of not worrying about this and allow the school to take on this worry. We have no idea about how exams will look, nor how courses will be completed around the country. However, please remember that our students are excellent, our teachers are skilled and our families are supportive. All schools will be impacted, but we will be in a stronger position than most across the county. Most of our students in year 10 have been in school for 3 ½ years, so already have good knowledge, strong reading skills and the motivation to succeed. This period out will cause adjustments to school when we return but we will put the children's health and success at the centre of our planning.

Possible Changes

With the school being closed prematurely, it has meant that some of our planned changes in and around school have not been possible. This has included things like renaming rooms, through to possible changes to the school day. We also have new staff joining us as well as changes expected to our building/classrooms. Whilst it is difficult to communicate everything at the moment, I hope I am able to share things online and keep you all up to date.

Thank you again for all of your support and please pass on my thanks and best wishes to your children. It is clear from all the conversations at school that we genuinely miss seeing them all!

Take care,



Ray Baker
Headteacher