



Dunston Hill

Community Primary School

Thursday 19 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Update

As you will know, the government has now stated that schools in England will be closed from the end of the school day on Friday March 20th 2020. This decision, now it has been made, seems a relatively straightforward one. However, the requirement for schools to remain open for some children with particular needs or for those whose parents are key workers has faced us with challenges as a school to overcome with very little notice. I would stress, all of us are keen to support our wonderful key workers and children who have additional needs. The fact that we were told at the same time the rest of the country was has meant that we have a huge number of questions that require answers from government and there has been little clarification so far this morning. It's important to remember that our staff can be classed as key workers too and have the same worries about family and the same pressures at home as others. This includes our non-teaching and Office staff. As soon as I can update you with relevant information I will do so.

The staff team here at Dunston Hill has been absolutely fantastic over the last couple of weeks. We all realise that these are extraordinary circumstances and scary times for everyone and I have always said that my primary aim has been the welfare of children, parents, staff and the wider community. The team have been flexible, empathetic to the needs of our families and continued to teach to a very high standard, when faced with the additional pressures in school as well as worries about their own families, children and vulnerable relatives. I am full of admiration for each and every one of them. I would also like to thank all those parents and carers who have left lovely messages for our staff on Facebook and liked our posts. It really is appreciated and means a lot to us. We have even had a few gifts of biscuits and cakes and even hand cream delivered this morning which is just so wonderful of you.

I just wanted to briefly outline and clarify the measures we have put in place below and how you are able to help. To be clear, we do not know when school will re-open. We are hoping that we may be back for part of the summer term but this is pure speculation. It is really important that you read the next few bullet points carefully.

- Tomorrow may be the last day that the children are in our school for a while. We will make it as special as we can for them. I would like all children to be present in school in their uniform as I want to foster a feeling of togetherness and it may be the last time for a while they can wear their uniform.
- We have created a PowerPoint presentation to be shown to children in their classes this afternoon and talked to them about what is happening, what will happen tomorrow and in the future that we know about. This is an inclusive and nurturing school and we want to ensure that we are supporting any worries or anxiety the children have.
- Staff have created a physical pack for every single child in school to take home today; from Nursery to Year 6. This includes, where possible, additional resources for our SEN children and those with additional needs that we can practically accommodate. Please resist the temptation to open and work on the pack straight away. Many teachers have put specific tasks in the packs which are to be done when instructed by the teacher (I will explain more about this).
- If your child is currently off school through illness or self-isolation, you can pick their pack up from 2.30pm until 3.30pm this afternoon as we have already stated. You will also be able to collect your child's pack on Friday morning from 08:30am to 09:30am and again at the end of the afternoon from 2.30pm. Packs can

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also be collected on Monday morning from 08:30am. Packs are to be collected from the front of school by the Office, not from the classrooms.

From Monday 23rd March 2020

- Every day, before 09:30am starting next Monday 23rd March, we will post on Facebook some tasks we would like the children to do or some suggestions for activities. This applies from Nursery through to Year 5 and will be age-appropriate. Some of these tasks will link to resources in the packs so as I mentioned earlier, please don't start working on them immediately or you will not have the required resources when your child needs them.
- For those of you without Facebook, we will also email these tasks to you daily. I apologise that many of you will therefore get this information twice but it was the best way for us to easily implement this system.
- We have also put access to these tasks on our website. When you load our Homepage, a large box will appear. At the bottom, in a blue box are the words "Year Group Task Information Nursery – Y5". You then click where it says "Click Here" and it will take you to the tasks.
- If you have any questions about the tasks themselves you have 2 options. You can email us back whenever you like, replying to the email we will have sent you. Or, you can message us as a school via Facebook Messenger privately. **However, we will only monitor those emails on a daily basis between the standard school hours of 09:00am until 3:30pm and get back to you as soon as we can.** You will understand that we will not be able to necessarily respond immediately but promise that all queries will be answered as best as we can.
- **Taking this into account can we please ask that you do not post questions or comments about the tasks or teaching and learning on the Facebook posts. We do not have the capacity to prepare and set tasks, answer email questions and monitor Facebook at the same time. Any messages or questions not relevant to the post will not be responded to and deleted. We would love it if you "like" the posts however, as we will be able to see who is interacting with us and whether you like the tasks. Send us an "emoji" on the post when you have finished it, perhaps.**

Year 6

- For our Year 6 children, we have created an online teaching environment. All the children have been provided with their own logins and are able to access lessons from their teachers each morning. We have spent this week testing the online platform and kept Year 6 parents informed of progress. They were all testing the system when I walked round school this morning and it was working brilliantly. In the event of them not being able to access the online learning, they also have a pack, which has online activities to complete.
- Our aim in supplying these packs, tasks and online learning is to ensure that, as far as possible, children continue to develop their knowledge and skills. We don't know what the future holds at this point but if we were not to come back until the start of the new academic year, (and we don't know this!), we want our Year 6 children to be "secondary ready" and our other children to be ready to tackle their next year of education. It is a huge disappointment to hear that the SATs have been cancelled but it's understandable. We are very clear on where our Year 6 children stand in terms of attainment, however and as far as we are concerned, they are already superstars!

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These are extraordinary times and all we can do is do our best to deal with them calmly, professionally, with good humour when we can and determination that we will get through this together. I am so proud of all the children who have had to deal with scary things such as self-isolation, worries about relatives and friends, the fact that they will be missing their friends at school and they don't know when they will be coming back. We are also thinking of those children already at home and miss them a great deal. Yet as I walk around school today there is such a positive atmosphere from everyone. Children are getting on with their learning, their behaviour has been exemplary and as ever they are unfailingly polite and respectful. I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of this amazing team.

Please keep checking Facebook, emails and texts regularly over the next few days as well as our website of course. I will send another letter home tomorrow with further updates as I get them.

There has been a huge amount of work undertaken by staff in a very short space of time this week so please forgive us if everything isn't quite perfect or there are one or two technical glitches along the way. Just let us know if you are having any trouble and we will sort it out as quickly as we can. We really appreciate your patience.

Go Team Dunston! #BeMoreKind

Yours sincerely

CR Sutherland

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