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9th April 2020

TO ALL FAMILIES ACROSS THE LEARN TO LIVE FEDERATION

Dear Families,

You are all very much in my thoughts and those of my colleagues. I know this is a terrible time for everyone, especially as several of you have had to also cope with being ill from the virus and some have experienced the tragedy of losing loved ones. If you are one of those families, please accept my deepest condolences.

As you know, the safest place to be is at home. Many of your children and family members are highly vulnerable and must stay at home until this horrible virus can be kicked out of our lives. This is bound to be really tough but there will be an end to it. We will continue to do all we can to support you. I know it's not what you would really like to happen and what we are longing for, which is to get back to how things should be, welcoming our children and young people into school every day. But if we stick at it, stay at home and stay safe, we will be able to get back to normal sooner than if we take risks now.

Just because the buildings are mainly shut, it does not mean the school is not "open". Right now, we are just having to work differently but we are very much here for you. We are making weekly phone calls to check in with you (some families prefer daily calls - please let us know what's best for you); the Home Learning areas on the websites are being updated every week with new content and if you are eligible for free school meals, you will be receiving vouchers. We took around food parcels initially because the voucher scheme hadn't started and we were worried about you, but the vouchers are now in place and will come to you weekly. If you don't have a printer at home, or are struggling to access the Home Learning resources, mention it in the weekly phone call and we will post or deliver some physical resources to you. I have also seen guidance that says you can use Direct Payments to buy equipment/technology to support your child's "education, entertainment and wellbeing", by using Short Breaks allocation that you may otherwise be unable to use. This could mean being able to purchase IT equipment to help with Home Learning.

Some families have asked for "through the window" contact visits. We are happy to arrange that if you or your child would like it. We have also supported some families by picking up shopping when it's been hard to get a delivery slot. Again, please let us know.

After Easter, we will not be able to fully open up the school buildings. The risk to the children, yourselves and the staff is too great. We will be able to provide some childcare for families of essential key workers who absolutely cannot make other arrangements, and possibly provide emergency respite days for a very small number of children already known to us. However, I would stress again that home really is the safest place for everyone to be at this present time. Any children coming in to school will be in a single classroom with just one child and two members of staff. They will not mix with other children or staff because we have to keep the number of contacts to a minimum so that the risk of them coming home to you infected is kept as low as possible. I cannot guarantee that the staff will be their class staff and the staff will change regularly because we are working a shift pattern so that staff are also kept as safe as possible.

For some children, this amount of change will be devastating and we need to consider very carefully whether your child could cope with it. They will expect school to be just as it usually is – and it will be anything but. We can arrange Transport if needed, but again, it is not likely to be the usual driver and escort and may change without warning. These are things we have to manage, because we are dealing with very unusual and difficult circumstances.

If we are able to offer your child some time in school, we will contact you to talk about it by the end of the week. We will be taking things a week at a time and even if we can't offer your child some time in school this week, we may be able to in the weeks to come.

As always in dark and difficult times, there are wonderful, golden moments. Teachers are delighted with the photographs of the learning activities you are doing at home, on Evidence for Learning – you are doing some fantastic, inspiring things with your children. So many of you have let us know that you are using and enjoying the resources the teachers and staff have made for you. It really is heart-warming, thank you.

Next week, teachers will be working on arranging Skype sessions so that children can see staff and their friends. You will receive more information on this from your class teacher. I know they are keen to get it going because we all miss the children and it will be lovely to see them.

Thank you for all you are doing to access the learning resources online. Stay safe, speak soon.

Yours faithfully



Jacqui Warne
Executive Head

