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17th July 2020

TO FAMILIES AT THE LEARN TO LIVE FEDERATION

Dear Families,

Thank you all for working with us so closely this term.

Families have provided huge amounts of information for teachers on Evidence for Learning and in other ways, which has been appreciated and enjoyed by staff. Teachers have been inspired by what you have been able to achieve.

You have also supported us in making all the complicated arrangements that have been necessary in order to get children into school where it has been appropriate. I sincerely thank you for all you have done to make it possible to open the schools as much as we have been able to over the past months. Across the federation, nearly 230 children have had some provision in school and about 150 have been accessing the outreach programme of going out walking or cycling, on exercise breaks with staff, as well as or instead of coming into the schools. We could not have put this much in place without your support, so thank you.

Your children have been incredible. They have had so many changes and differences to cope with. While it hasn't been easy for them, we have seen countless examples of children adapting well and accepting that things aren't anything like they usually are in school. Again I thank families because I'm sure you must've been doing a great deal to prepare and support your children to be ready for things being different.

The teachers and teaching assistants who have been in regular contact with you very much value the deepened relationships between home and school and feel a real sense of connection with you all. This has helped and encouraged them in making the films and resources for the Home Learning sites that so many of you have told us you enjoy accessing with your children.

In September 2020, we are making the assumption that our schools and college will be fully open for all pupils, Monday to Friday as normal.

Transport has informed us that all routes will be operating as usual, with full buses rather than the very small number of passengers they are currently carrying. (The exception to this is transport for our most vulnerable pupils who will be attending a different building for a while).

All of this, of course, is assuming things continue as they are in terms of the COVID-19 infection rate continuing to reduce with no sign of a second spike in infections. Currently, the South West continues to have very low numbers of infection. Hopefully, this will continue to be the case because in order to open fully and ensure every pupil can attend every day, we won't be able to provide the same level of distancing and segregation as we have now because we don't have enough spaces. Classes will have to operate largely as normal, but with the following precautions:

- Each key stage will form a “pod” and there will be no mixing of children or staff between Key Stage Pods.
- Within each key stage, 2 or 3 classes will be linked to form a “bubble”. While we will keep the mixing of children between classes to a minimum, there will be friends who want to see each other and groups that work well for particular aspects of learning, so with careful plans to distance as much as possible, this can happen across the bubble of classes.
- We will allocate any staff who are not class based to each key stage in order to provide cover in case of staff absence. This is to minimise the risk of sending children home if we run short of staff, but if there is a high level of staff illness, we cannot rule out having to send children home if staffing levels are unsafe. We will not be using supply staff from agencies.
- Bubbles will have playground spaces and times allocated to them so that we do not have large numbers congregating together.
- There will be no whole school events such as assemblies, productions, fetes. I cannot predict when these things will re-start. In the meantime, we will work on doing things virtually as far as we can. Our IT team have been absolutely amazing and are coming up with solutions to all sorts of issues, so I’m sure they will find ways to help us to celebrate key events together as a community, using virtual technology.
- Classes will continue to eat their lunch in classrooms, not using communal dining areas for now.
- The hydrotherapy pools remain closed for now. We were advised by the DfE to follow the advice for public pools which will not re-open until the end of July. When they do re-open, the priority for their use will be for hydrotherapy and not for general swimming or hiring out. There is new guidance on safe use of hydrotherapy pools in terms of showering and PPE use which we will have in place for the start of the Autumn term.
- There will be no inclusion or work experience placements until it is safe to re-start them. Off-site visits will mainly be limited to outdoor walking/exercise. Pupils will not be visiting shops or busy places such as beaches or popular attractions.
- No residential visits are allowed at present.
- Hand hygiene remains of key importance, with hand washing and the use of hand sanitiser needing to be a regular part of everyone’s day.
- As now, anyone who is unwell will need to remain at home (or go home straight away) and book a COVID-19 test. This will become even more important when everyone is back.
- If someone in school tests positive, we will be guided by Public Health England as to the correct response, but everyone needs to be prepared for the possibility of having to completely close the site for up to 14 days in the worst case scenario.

If there is a second spike of infection and another lockdown, we will return to the arrangements that were in place during the first half of this term, with the Home Learning sites being a key source of learning activities and support resources and limited places in school for children of key workers and those deemed most vulnerable by social care.

There are a small number of pupils in each school who have very complex health needs, making them especially vulnerable. There was a real concern that these children and young people may not be able to return to school for some time, or would have to do so despite there being enhanced risk. This did not seem a fair option so as a federation, we have rented the Hex building on the Dartington Estate, for a year. It is a beautiful building with large spaces which teachers, site teams and the IT team are currently working on turning into a lovely learning environment. Families of these particularly complex children have been contacted separately and have the choice to send their child to this facility for the next academic year. There will be very few children in large spaces, operating under very strict cross-contamination and infection control procedures so that we can offer these pupils their right to their EHCP provision, while making it as safe as possible. Families, staff and other agencies have all worked together on this and have been amazing – it was a big thing to get organised in a very short space of time.

If you feel your child is very vulnerable but you have not been included in this group, please contact school for a discussion about this.

Finally, I am sorry the class lists are so late coming out. As you can imagine, there have been many re-drafts, especially in the light of the opening of the Hex building. Next week, we will be able to finalise everything and confirm your child's class teacher for September 2020.

It is very sad that the Hollow Lane Club are unable to run this year and I know the trustees had a great deal of soul-searching to do before they made the decision. It was the right one, despite it being so hard a decision to make. All the school sites have significant building work taking place over the summer, so Hollow Lane Club would have been very reliant on going out on trips and that is very limited this year, with most leisure facilities being closed or heavily restricted.

I know the summer club playworkers are preparing films and activities that you will be able to access for free. You will be sent more information about this.

Thank you again for working with us. As one of the teachers said to me, "it really feels like we are all part of a school family". It is important that you know how much we appreciate all that you have done and continue to do, to make this the case. I do hope your summer goes smoothly and I look forward to welcoming pupils back at Bidwell Brook School, Ellen Tinkham School and Ellen Tinkham College on Tuesday 8th September 2020.

Yours faithfully



Jacqui Warne
Executive Head

THE HEX FACILITY

Some additional information for those whose children will be attending the Hex.

Thank you for making the tough decision to let us provide something different for your child, (or for considering it if you are still undecided). I realise this is not an easy choice to make but by continuing to work together, we will do everything we can to make sure your child has access to their EHCP provision while also being kept as safe as possible from COVID-19. Everyone on the staff team is determined to make this work and make it a lovely learning environment for your child.

Key people from other agencies (nursing teams, therapists and school transport), have been brilliant in supporting us to make this work. There will be a therapy and medical office on site and these teams are busy planning their support for the facility. Some of the medical/therapy assistants employed by the schools are also going to be there. The hydrotherapy pool at Bidwell Brook will be our priority in terms of re-opening, for use by pupils at the Hex. There is an entrance separate to the school entrance, so we can ensure it is safe and we will be fully risk assessing it in terms of COVID-19 before starting sessions.

Attached is a floor plan showing the layout of the Hex building. It's huge! It is sited on the Dartington Hall Estate near to the Park School and Park House, in a lovely setting. We will be fencing off an area outside of the building to make a safe outside space but will have access to the Dartington Hall Estate for walks in the fresh air.

Transport is working on routes and have been amazing, fully understanding the need to keep this group safe. Pupils will not be accessing the usual transport but will have their own arrangements in place. In some cases, the staff working with the children will act as escorts. By collecting your child and going straight to the Hex, the time spent on transport will be minimised as there will be few, if any, extra pick-ups.

There is huge interest among staff to support this and a list of staff will be with you soon. There are staff from both schools so there will be someone on site who knows your child. A number of people who are key to your child will be available to them.

Meals will come over from the Bidwell Brook kitchen. The children at the Hex who have school lunches will have the same menu choices as everyone else. Tony Kershaw, the Chef, is working on menus right now, planning meals that travel well! (It's not far from Bidwell Brook and food will be delivered in hot boxes).

During the first week of term, staff will receive essential training from nurses and therapists. We will also be organising transition visits across the week, inviting you and your child to come along, meet the team, familiarise yourself with the building and chat about targets.

The first "proper" day of term for this group at the Hex will be Monday 14th September 2020.

We are keeping the school day from 9 am until 3 pm as this makes things a bit easier for transport and it also helps to ensure the days are not too long for the pupils.

Equipment is being taken across to the Hex over the summer holiday, from both schools. This includes mobile and gantry hoists; individual physiotherapy equipment; trampolines for rebound therapy; eye gaze equipment; light room equipment and individual resource boxes. We are also investing in new equipment and furniture which will go back into the schools at the end of next year.

Key among this new equipment will be IT equipment for each of the three class bases, with large interactive screens. This will allow the pupils at the Hex to be in regular contact with pupils and staff in the schools and college via virtual technology.

Katy Bradley will be the Senior Leader based at the Hex. Katy is currently based at Ellen Tinkham but has taught in both schools and knows many of you already.

A phone system is being installed and the Hex will have its own phone number which we will forward to you as soon as we can.

We will send you more information when we have it and look forward to hosting your visit in September.

[Hex floor plan attached]

