

Dear Parents,

You will all be aware of the decision to close all UK schools from Monday. We have no option but to comply and hope that the provision we have created for the next two weeks is as close to the normal school experience as possible. We obviously also hope that this drastic action will be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and that we will be able to return to school sooner rather than later.

Thank you to the many parents who have been in touch with messages of appreciation and encouragement. Your kind words have been just the tonic required! I was particularly touched to hear from a parent this morning that 'this school is one of the calmest places around.'

This has absolutely been our intention this week; to make plans in the background, but to provide the children with normality. It has been important too for the staff, with some commenting that it is only when they have been absorbed in the flow of a lesson that they are able to forget this crisis for a short time. Thank you also to all the staff who have been as conscientious as always during this challenging time. Today 100% staff were in school, with 117 pupils. As we move into a new phase of dealing with COVID-19, staff have been assigned to one of three groups; some will be on site, but only for limited periods of time (to reduce exposure to children). Others will be on site, but not in contact with children. A final group, who have vulnerable family members, will be off site for a number of weeks, but working remotely.

Our plans for the next fortnight (10 school days) are as follows:

1. Vulnerable pupils and children of key workers will be offered on-site lessons. What exactly constitutes 'vulnerable' and 'key' is still under discussion. The staff and I have created an initial list of these pupils and (for GDPR purposes) will email relevant parents separately. Please be respectful in terms of confidentiality when you discover a child is/is not attending school - there are a myriad of reasons as to why each situation may be most appropriate. Speculation is never helpful.
2. Tasks for learning will be posted each morning on the school website. These will be split into whole year groups for YR and Y1 and further split into Lime Y2 and Apple Y2. There is a new tab on the homepage of the website entitled COVID-19. This will be populated each morning by 9.30am. The tasks for each day will include a written task, an outdoors challenge, an online activity and a practical Maths activity. These will be planned individually by our teachers in school who know your children well. The same activities will be offered to the pupils on-site, to aid continuity once we recongregate. There will also be a reminder to read daily and there will be a reflective activity to replace daily assemblies. Feel free to do more! In addition to the four daily tasks there will be a 'weekly special' as planned by our subject leaders each day. This will provide children with the opportunities to continue to more creative aspects of the curriculum.

3. Each pupil will be given a small object to take home tomorrow. They will see all the objects together in assembly tomorrow, with each one representing a child. As they take them home, they will hear that they are an important part of the school, even though they are a few roads away from their classroom. Once we return to school together, they will be asked to bring their objects back and they will remain on display as a group. When you are working with your child during the next ten days, please take this object out of a drawer and place it on the table as a sign that school is beginning. I also recommend dressing your child in their uniform each morning to reinforce the message that this is school work. Each teacher will send home an exercise book today or tomorrow which will look just like the books we use in class. I hope that this will also help children to associate this part of their time at home with lessons.
4. Children will be issued with a reading book, as usual, today or tomorrow. If possible, please arrange to swap these using your class WhatsApp groups, possibly posting through letter boxes. It is actually beneficial for children to sometimes read an easier or harder book than usual, so don't worry if the 'right' colour is not available. Feel free to help your child either more or less than usual in response.
5. Mothers' Day shopping for Beech is taking place as I write, and the final class will have their turn tomorrow. The singing from a group of Year 2 pupils for their parents is still scheduled to take place in the hall at 2.40 tomorrow. I cannot think of a better way to end the week.

I will email again tomorrow.

Best Regards,
Andrea