29th April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

On behalf of the Leadership Team and all staff at the school, we hope that your family is safe and well and we would like to thank you for your support of the school during this time.

We are all working hard together to adapt to working in different contexts and the challenges that brings, whilst wanting to communicate ever changing information from the Government coherently to our community; thank you for your patience as we navigate this unchartered territory. We really appreciate how you are all embracing ‘home learning’ with your own children and thank you for the positive way in which you are asking questions and seeking further support from the school.

Seventeen school days have passed since the government officially closed schools for the majority of our children. Social distancing has had a direct impact on all of us and adjustments are constant.

There have been some unhelpful speculations released by the press about schools and colleges and so I thought I would use this time to outline where we are as a school community. Mrs Crook as head of the federation is in twice weekly conference calls with other Head teachers across Devon and the Head of Education for the local authority Dawn Stabb, and they are helping to shape our responses to the governments’ priorities within a local context. I am also in weekly conference calls with the heads of the other schools in Tiverton.

**Schools/colleges re-opening**

There is lots of discussion at both national and local government levels about the prospect of schools re-opening. However, the government are clear that in order to begin to lift some of the social distancing and lock down restrictions there are 5 clear tests that need to be passed before this is considered and therefore before we can begin to see school gates unlocked;

**1) Making sure the NHS can cope**

**2) A 'sustained and consistent' fall in the daily death rate**

**3) Rate of infection decreasing to 'manageable levels'**

**4) Ensuring supply of tests and PPE can meet future demand**

**5) Being confident any adjustments would not risk a second peak**

Sadly, there is currently no immediate plan to re-open schools. However, as you can imagine discussions are taking place about what that might look like when we are notified. It is important that as a community we are all clear about how the school will function post lock down, whilst we still may need to adhere to some, or all, existing social distancing rules.

**Home learning**

Thank you for all your efforts in supporting your son/daughter through the last 3 school weeks. Families having to adjust, suddenly finding themselves all working from home is a challenge and it is important at this time that we aren’t too hard on ourselves and our children.

Feedback from parents and pupils is that the way the home learning is set out is helpful and doesn’t feel too overwhelming. You are also reporting that you are spending time playing, cooking, gardening etc. These are all valuable learning opportunities and a great way to make learning practical and fun! The home learning can be found on the school website and is uploaded each Monday. (<https://heathcoat.devon.sch.uk/home-learning-resources/>)

Learning at home is very different than being in school and we are recommending that you set up a routine to the day so that children know what to expect each day. Part of this routine is to have regular breaks during the day as well as working in slots of 30 – 40 minutes.

Please be reassured that we know all families are working within different contexts and facing lots of challenges and additional pressures; we are ensuring that the learning provision is accessible for all so includes some traditional worksheet resources as well as some online learning.

If you have any further questions about specific work, please do not hesitate to email the class teachers directly for advice and support.

Below are some reminder ‘Top Tips’ on how to continue to create a positive learning environment at home for your child.

**Top Tips**

**Be realistic about what you can do**

* You are not expected to become teachers and your children are not expected to learn as they do in school. Simply providing your children with some structure at home will help them to adapt.
* Check in with your children and try to keep to a timetable but be flexible. If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible.
* If you have more than one child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do mathematics together – see what works for your household.
* Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over.
* Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life.
* Regularly check the school Facebook page and school website as this often contains additional information especially around mental health and well-being.
* Let the school know if your son/daughter is unable to access work or has limited computer access. We can provide paper-based resources.

**Trips and school events**

Any trips and school events that were planned for this term have been cancelled due to the uncertainty of the length of the lock down and expectations around social distancing, should schools re-open before the end of the summer term.

Please do contact us at the school if you feel we can do any more to support you during this time. Ultimately, the most important thing to us is the wellbeing of the children, their family, our staff and our wider community.

Please continue to stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Miss Higginson

Head of School