

7.4.2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

It seems like a very long time since we were all together as a school when in actual fact it has been only just over two weeks. How the world has changed in such a short time! The start of the Easter holidays seems an opportune time to contact you all to let you know how things are at our schools and that we are thinking of you during this highly challenging season.

We have combined our children into mixed phases on all our sites but kept numbers low to minimise risk, as staffing was becoming a worry with many staff either ill, caring for vulnerable relatives or children, or self-isolating due to medical conditions of one kind or another.

Our staff are continuing to come into work through the school Easter holidays to provide childcare for the children of critical workers. Many of them, though outwardly cheerful, are anxious about their own families and are juggling working at school with providing care and also home schooling their own children with partners who are also critical workers; the position I know many of you are also in.

I wanted to mention that while we have become care workers and not a school in the normal way of thinking, we are also providing activities for the children to do at home. It has been emphasised to us that this is not statutory but that schools may do this if they wish. We are more than happy to provide activities for your children to do while at home but I want to emphasise that we are not in a position to teach, mark work or give learning feedback to individual children or groups of children. I have been in regular contact with all the Trust school heads and many other Manchester headteachers and the provision from our Trust schools matches very closely the offer from other local state schools.

I am also aware that school expectations for 'homework' can seem onerous and burdensome and I know from conversations on national forums that some parents are finding requirements from some schools impossible to keep up with. Please don't feel that all the activities provided have to be completed; this is very much under your control as a parent and the choice is yours. All we can provide in partnership together is the opportunity for children to use the Maths, English and wider curriculum skills and interests they have already been taught in a fun and practical way and can complete on their own for the most part. I am sure that our creative parents are also providing valuable activities of their own making to keep their children engaged.

Moving forward, our staff teams will continue to send activities and suggestions for constructive ways in which to engage your children.

Feel free to support your child with any of the practical tasks or indeed, join in! Allow your child to make some of the choices for themselves in the tasks that interest them.

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You are welcome to adapt any of the activities to suit your child's needs or extend their interests. Our expectation is that the children still in school will be doing something very similar to this.

I hope that you are all staying safe and well at this challenging time; we may well find that things take some time to change back to the way they were after all this.

In the meantime, all our parents, children and staff are very much in my thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely

Matt Whitehead

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