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17th July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is almost the end of this academic year which has unfortunately been dominated by this extraordinary period. The global pandemic has impacted on everybody's life; influencing the way in which we communicate and liaise with each other, how we work together, organise our private life and learning how to support each other through a range of different means. I believe that for most of us it has, at times been an extremely challenging journey.

We have done our very best to provide a safe space for students to attend and engage in their learning at school and to support your family and child at home.

- It has been really encouraging for us to note the progress that students have made in their small groups at school since March 23rd.
- Equally we have been absolutely delighted to see the many wonderful videos and photos of students' learning at home.
- However, the home situation is not school and we know that for many families it has been particularly difficult to balance home life with home schooling, and also coping with complex individual circumstances.

Whether your child has been at school or at home it has been a privilege to work in partnership with you. We truly appreciate your honest feedback, support and flexibility during this unprecedented time.

- Your co-operation and understanding has made it possible for us to offer a school placement for the maximum number of students at any given time and therefore you as a group of families have supported each other.

I am proud of my staff. They have, without hesitation, supported your child when he/she has been at school providing them with opportunities to learn and access pleasurable activities. My teachers have liaised closely with you and actively responded to your individual circumstances. Without a dedicated, skilled and forward thinking staff our COVID school journey may have looked very different.

Home and school, working in partnership has supported your child to go through this incredibly unsettling time. This is the key to their wellbeing and learning.

September: After the holidays we will start the second chapter of our COVID journey. We have made plans for all students to return to school from 7th September. Therefore I want to share with you information about

- Attendance expectation
- Risk assessment and organisation for September
- Curriculum
- Home learning and use of EDMODO
- Social media sites
- Visits/visitors to school
- Transport
- The first day for the students 7th September

I apologise for the length of my last letter to you. The last full week of term has been very busy with many updates from the DfE, HCC and Admissions and Transport that I need to share with you.

Attendance expectation

- The government is very clear in their expectation that all students should to return to school.
- Please note that attending and transitioning back to school may include a period of transition that will be authorised.
- We have a very small number of students who may need to continue their home learning if the medical guidance for some conditions remains as it is currently. We continue to closely monitor the development of any medical guidance and will get in touch with these families in early September for individual updates.
- We will send a short questionnaire for all families during the week commencing 24th August to receive your feedback about whether you would prefer your child to attend for a full time school placement or if you consider a phased return would be more suited to your child's needs. We think that it would have been too early to ask you to make definite decision about your child's schooling arrangement now as it is impossible to anticipate the COVID situation and the government's guidance in six weeks' time.
- Those students who will have a phased return to school will be supported in their home learning.

Risk assessment and organisation

We are currently planning a risk assessment for a September opening. All our plans are based on the government and the HCC's guidance – currently we are in the process of preparing our 'COVID risk assessment for September 2020' in line with the guidance for special school settings.

Whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally COVID risk-free environment we have reviewed and revised all our operations to minimise virus transmission. Key elements of safe working practice are separated groups of students (Bubbles), social distancing, enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning.

I would like to draw your attention to a few key points;

- **Meadow Wood** Bubble 1: Rabbits, Field mice - Bubble 2A: Owls, Ladybirds and Bubble 2B Squirrels. All bubbles have a different access and exit to and from the school building.
Breakspeare Bubble 1: Red, Orange, Yellow, Pink – Bubble 2: Green, White - Bubble 3: Brown and Bubble 4: Purple, Blue and Silver. Bubble 1 uses the sport hall to access and exit the building.
- Students and staff do not mix between the bubbles during the school day.
- At Breakspeare some specialist areas and activities such as soft play, rebound, and outdoor play areas are allocated to certain bubbles to cater for specific additional needs such as PMLD or ASD.
- Teachers PPA cover, Music and PE is organised in bubbles.
- The students will generally swim every second week to minimise the number of people using the changing rooms at the same time (closed space).
- **Meadow Wood** students, apart from Squirrels, will eat in their classrooms – Squirrels will continue to eat in the hall.
Breakspeare students will mainly eat in their classrooms. Some students will eat in the dining hall. You may want to consider providing your child with packed lunch.
- Students will use their individual resources. Shared resources are cleaned between either individual use or use by different bubbles.
- Additional cleaning is carried out during the school day in common areas and the classrooms.
- Other risk control and management measures are
 - Individual risk assessment – for both students and staff
 - The Sunflower Federation Safe Working Guidance
 - The Sunflower Federation PPE Guidance
- In order for us to promptly review our organisation, implement and communicate any possible urgent changes, the first day of the autumn term is shorter
 - Monday 7th September, the school day will finish at 1 pm in both schools.
- Our new students will start their transition to our schools during the week commencing 21st September. This arrangement is to stagger the students' start at our schools and to support the consolidation of new routines.

We will share our risk assessment with you at the beginning of the autumn term when it has been finalised. The risk assessment will be reviewed regularly to reflect the guidance at time.

Curriculum

In September we will be implementing a 'Recovery Curriculum' where our emphasis will be on providing pastoral care to all our pupils so that they can get to a place where they are ready to re-join their learning journey and to secure progress. We want to support the students to be at ease with their learning, school routines and relaxed within their peer group: always keeping their wellbeing at the heart of all school activities.

Out of school activities will resume as soon as our external partners inform us that they are able to welcome school groups to their establishments (swimming, horse riding, community visits etc.). Some extra curriculum activities will resume remotely such as Funky Pie/Arts Award.

Home learning and use of EDMODO

We are prepared to provide home education support for those students who will have a slower transition to school (phased return) or should there need to be a local lockdown.

- Use of EDMODO will cease at the end of this academic year. The teachers will save (as is appropriate) any home learning photos and videos in the students' progress folders.
- Next academic year we will start to use Microsoft 365 Education as our online platform. This is to streamline our use of the Microsoft package. Microsoft 365 Education provides similar functions to those of EDMODO.

Social media sites

At the beginning of the next academic year 'The Sunflower Federation' social media site functions will be separated.

- Facebook page- will highlight the schools' and federation's celebrations, achievements and news.
- YouTube channel - will be used to share videos of learning activities, training and interviews
- We will reconfirm parents/ carers' permission for publicity for all students at the beginning of term.

Visits/visitors to school

- We continue to limit the number of visitors at school.
- We will only welcome our NHS colleagues (therapists, specialists) and our own therapists (music, dog) to school in September.
- EHCP meetings will primarily continue via Microsoft Teams' conference calls.

Transport

Social distancing will not be required on LA contracted transport and they are therefore planning to run transport contracts as normal, with additional health and safety precautions in place to minimise the risk of spreading infection.

- Please see attached important information from Admissions and Transport Teams.

If you choose to transport your child to school note that:

- At Breakspeare you are able to access the school transport area in your own car as soon as the 'IN' gate (left) has been opened after the school transport vehicles. School times are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 – 3.15 and Thursday 9 -2. You can wait in the Manor House Car Pak opposite the school.
- Meadow Wood school we need to stagger parents and transport vehicles' drop off and pick up. School transport drop off and pick up times are 8.45 and 3 o'clock. Parents can drop their child at 9 am and pick them up at 3.15. Pick up time on Thursday is 2 pm. This arrangement will reduce congestion at the front of the school. This arrangement doesn't reduce your child's statutory curriculum time.
- At both schools we kindly ask that parents and carers wait outside for your child to be collected from you and in the afternoon they will be brought to you, again outside the school building, at all times social distancing must be followed – please do not access the school building other than by an agreed separate arrangement.

Next steps summary

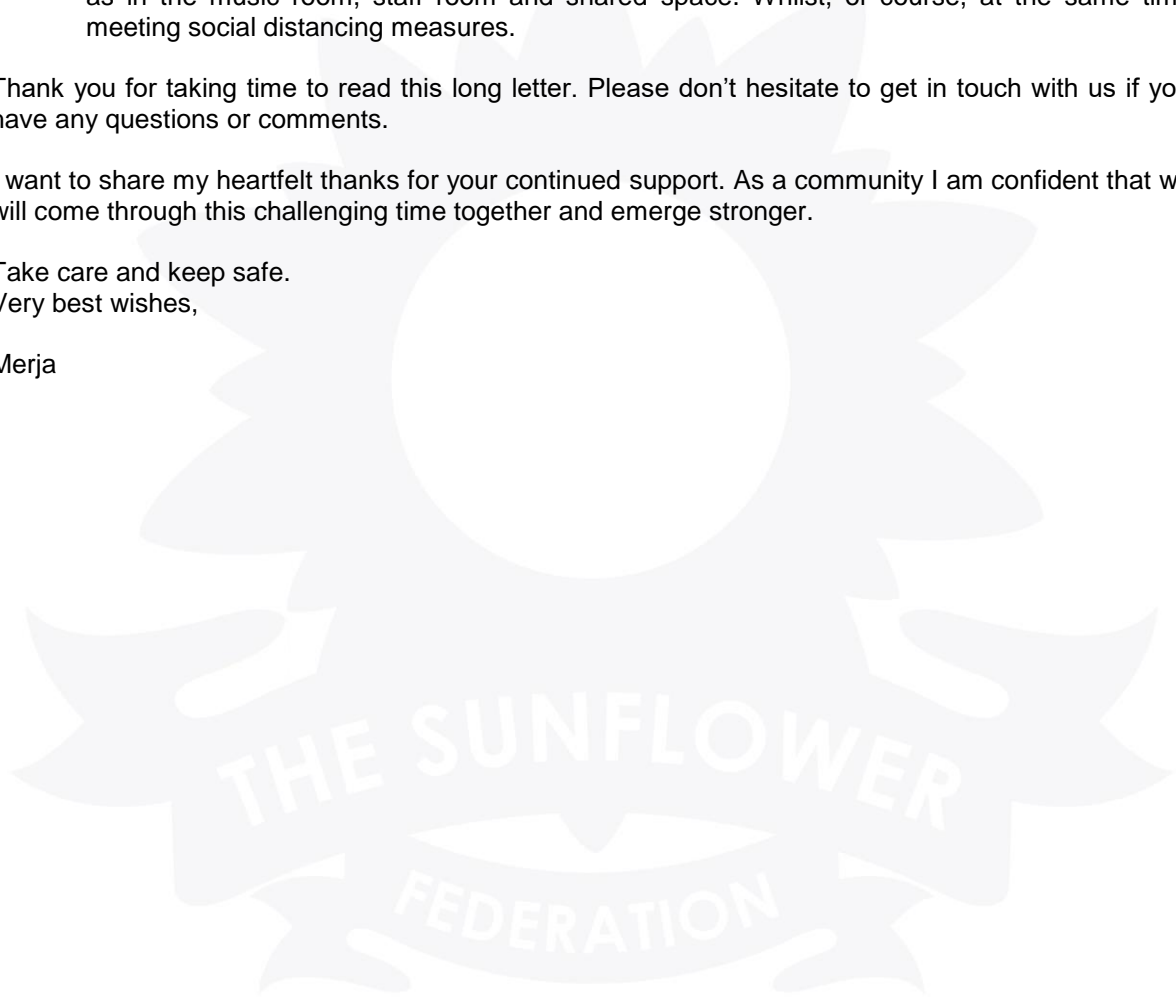
- During the week commencing 24th August we will send you an email requesting feedback on your thoughts about your child's return to school and then liaise with you accordingly.
- Please consider carefully the attached letter from the Admissions and Transport Team (attachment).
- If you choose to transport your child yourself please cancel his/her regular transport by contacting both provider (Lockett's) and Admissions and Transport. Please email the school as well.
- The length of first day of the term on 7th September is 9 – 1
- You will receive our COVID risk assessment the first week of the autumn term.
- I am delighted to share with our Breakspeare parents that the installation of our new unit is progressing smoothly and it is likely that any disturbance in the autumn term will be much less than we anticipated. This is really positive as we needed to locate three groups temporarily in the main school site – placing them (albeit) temporarily in smaller / inadequate spaces such as in the music room, staff room and shared space. Whilst, of course, at the same time meeting social distancing measures.

Thank you for taking time to read this long letter. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions or comments.

I want to share my heartfelt thanks for your continued support. As a community I am confident that we will come through this challenging time together and emerge stronger.

Take care and keep safe.
Very best wishes,

Merja



ATTACHMENT

13th July 2020

Information form Hertfordshire Admission and Transport

To parent/carers whose child/ren are entitled for home-school transport

Following the government's announcement that all pupils should return to school full-time in September, the county council is working with schools and transport operators to plan home to school transport.

I can confirm that all vehicles contracted by the county council, including taxis and minibuses to Special Schools, will run as "normal" from September. The guidance we have received is clear that social distancing is not required on vehicles contracted by the county council to transport children to and from school.

You should therefore expect your child to travel in a shared vehicle unless there are specific circumstances (unrelated to COVID-19) that mean your child needs to travel alone.

I understand that this will be an anxious time for both parents and children and we are working with schools and operators to minimise any risk:

- Vehicles will be cleaned regularly
- Drivers will wear masks
- Handwashing/sanitising routines will be put in place by schools

I would ask that you contribute to this process by ensuring:

- Your child washes their hands before boarding the transport and immediately upon their return from school
- Your child understands that touch/contact with other passengers in the vehicle must be limited
- Any requests from schools/operators on safe travel are observed
- Your child does not travel if they show any symptoms of coronavirus and you immediately alert the school and operator.

Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs)

You may not be aware that you can request a PTB to allow you to arrange your child's travel to school. Given the concerns many families may have about their child returning to school and/or travelling on contracted transport, a PTB is an option that you may wish to consider.

PTBs are calculated on the basis of 0.45p a mile, using the child's home-school distance and four journeys a day. For example, a child living 10 miles from school would receive a PTB of £18 a day (0.45 x 10 x 4).

If you are interested in receiving a PTB you should contact the SEN transport team via email to schooltransport@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Best wishes,
Jayne Abery
Strategy and Policy Manager
Admissions & Transport, Children's Services