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23rd March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you very much for providing us with information about your preference to either self-isolate your child or to send him/her to school. Thank you as well to those parents who have promptly provided us with evidence of being a keyworker. Thank you also for your kind words and thoughts that you have shared with us during recent days. They mean a lot to all of us at school.

I would like to inform you about the latest development and actions that have been taken to manage the COVID- 19 situation in our schools.

School provision: Our ability to have a sufficient number of staff to take care of our students at school, is one of our biggest challenges during these unprecedented times. It was extremely difficult for us to make the decision today that we are not able to offer placements for all families who would have preferred to send their child to school.

We had to make the decision that considered an individual child's needs and how to secure and maximise the provision operationally. We prioritised our offer for those children of critical keyworkers, children who have a child protection plan or regular 6-8 weekly CIN meetings or live in a single parent household.

We have re-grouped the students into 6 small sets that are supported by staff from both Breakspeare and Meadow Wood Schools. We have prepared to keep these groups going as long as viable by allocating each group with the maximum number of staff. Our staffing is already, as I am now writing this letter, different to this morning when we re-designed our organisation.

You will be provided further information about your child's school group tomorrow.

Home provision: Many teachers have already provided you with activities and resources for home activities and others are actively preparing these for you. We originally planned to use the EDMONDO learning platform for communication between teachers and parents, but because of the high number or its global users, this provider is finding it difficult to operate according to demand. Therefore we are looking at establishing learning platforms in 'Microsoft Teams'.

Meanwhile the teachers will communicate with you via our school admin, post and telephone. Please email admin@breakspeare.herts.sch.uk or admin@meadowwood.herts.sch.uk your questions about home support.

In light of the Prime Ministers recent announcement this evening, if you wish to withdraw your child's school provision before Easter, please let us know as a matter of urgency using the email addresses above.

Anxiety and stress: The situation in the whole community is rapidly changing on many levels affecting our everyday life and routines, causing anxiety and stress. I have found the attached information on how to manage stress and anxiety caused by COVID – 19, very useful. Please feel free to share with anyone you think might find them beneficial. (2 attachments)

I would like to emphasise that all parents and staff members in our community sometimes need to make very difficult individual decisions for their family and children. These decisions cannot be the same because everyone's circumstances are unique. It is important that we show kindness, compassion and respect to each other at this exceptionally difficult time. We should avoid putting additional pressure on each other when we perhaps do not fully understand individual circumstances.

Further information:

- At this stage it is impossible to plan for our school situation after the Easter break. Therefore both Meadow Wood and Breakspeare Schools' will be closed on Monday 20th April for the students. This allows us to revisit and reorganise our organisation in line with the guidance at the time and the situation in the wider community.
- We will not be providing care provision for the students who currently have a placement at school during the Easter break. It could be possible that Easter provision might be available somewhere other than at Breakspeare School. We do not have any further information yet. Further information will be shared as soon as possible.
- We will establish 'The Sunflower Federation Schools' Facebook page where we will download short videos that you may enjoy watching with your child at home. You will be informed when it is up and running.
- If you have any concerns about your child's safety, wellbeing or pastoral care whether at home or at school, please don't hesitate to get in touch with either myself, Darren or Caroline. We are here to help and support you. Please keep us posted.
- We will be sending further information about free school meal provision for those children who are at home shortly.

I hope you find the information in this letter useful.

With very best wishes,

Merja

NOTE: Please note that the guidance can be updated very quickly.

Guidance for Parents and Carers - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Vulnerable Children Q&A: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Guidance for schools about temporarily closing: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>

Guidance on Key Workers/Vulnerable Children - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>