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Friday 27th March 2020

Headteacher update

Dear Parents and Carers

I wanted to write at the end of our first week of school closure to thank you for your support and compassion at this challenging time, whilst also providing a few updates as we aim to keep in touch in the coming weeks. Our small group of pupils in school have worked brilliantly and I am hearing many accounts of our pupils working really hard at home. I would like to also thank the staff who are working hard, both those at school and those at home, to continue to keep Google Classrooms updated, many of them whilst they are also supporting their own children with home learning! It certainly is a time where we are all having to adapt and overcome, but I feel very privileged to be working with such a brilliant group of staff, children and parents as we face this challenge together.

Home learning programme

Our pupils have made a **fantastic** start using Google Classroom and we very much appreciate your support in establishing routines. The majority of pupils have engaged with their work and I know that many are having regular contact with their teachers through this platform to get feedback and support.

In terms of the home learning programme, we would like to reassure parents that we do understand the challenges faced in supporting the children at home and the pressure this can also put on the use of available technology. If technology is an issue, please let us know and we are able to provide paper packs of work for children. We still have some of these available in the school office and we are currently working on packs for after the Easter break. These will need to be collected from school, but we can ensure this is done in a way that preserves social/physical distancing.

We have also had some feedback about quantity of work – either too much or not enough. In terms of work being too much, please support your child in pacing this appropriately. The teachers will continue to upload work on a daily basis according to the groups they would have been teaching, but we do understand that some pupils will work through this quickly and others will work through it at a more moderate pace – which links with their style of learning and their skills and abilities in the different subject areas. We do not want any of the pupils (or indeed families) becoming stressed about this and pupils can communicate with their teachers, so if they are finding a particular task too much or too tricky, please ask them to communicate this with their teacher and their teacher may well be able to recommend an alternative or suggest which parts are vital in the sequence of learning. Equally, you are best placed to monitor your child's response to the workload, and if it is causing problems, please encourage them to take a break and if they don't complete everything for a lesson they can either continue with it next time they have that lesson, or move on. Please assure them that we are really proud of the effort they are showing, but we do not want them to feel worried if they are unable to complete all of the work.



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Allenbourn
MIDDLE SCHOOL

In terms of there not being enough work, please can I encourage parents to look at the website where we have shared links to many different learning platforms that provide additional learning opportunities. Equally, your child will know what topics they are currently studying in each subject area, and it is always of value to deepen that knowledge, so they can carry out independent research into a particular topic area to provide a broader understanding if they so wish. Miss Nash has also sent out a voluntary history project, which is based on us developing our own social history of the current situation in which we find ourselves. This voluntary work is to write a daily or weekly diary, detailing what they have been up to, what is happening in the country and how they have responded to this – a bit like Samuel Pepys during the Great Fire of London!

Easter Holidays – Home learning

For the traditional two week Easter break (wb 6th and 13th April) activities will still be added to Google Classroom to maintain routine and structure. However, we aim to set something different and are working in collaboration with the other Trust middle schools to develop these activities. There will be no expectation about pupils completing these, but we wanted to provide some ideas for parents as we fully appreciate that it will not be a usual school holiday. Further details on this will follow next week.

Trips and visits

Unfortunately, we have had to make the decision to cancel all summer term trips and visits. This decision has not been taken lightly and has been made in the interest of pupil and staff safety whilst giving you as much notice as possible. As part of Wimborne Academy Trust, insurances are in place that will cover costs in full. Our office team, who have worked tirelessly in recent weeks, are already working to secure refunds. These will be issued as soon as it is possible. Early indications are that this may take a little time to process, but please be assured that we will make every effort to provide these refunds as soon as possible.

And finally, I would like to send our very best wishes to you all. It has only been a week since we bid goodbye to the majority of our pupils, but I would say to them that we miss you! We are also extremely impressed with the way in which you have demonstrated many of the school's key values – self-belief, perseverance and independence in the way that you have embraced the challenges, and perhaps opportunities, of home learning. Well done – you are marvellous!

We value our part in the community, so please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any support or guidance in the coming weeks.

Best wishes

Cindy Pritchard

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Headteacher