



NEWSLETTER – SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE

27th March 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

First of all, a HUGE thank you for all your support for the school and your diligence in following the Government guidelines during this very difficult period of 'lockdown'. All of us here at Stepping Stones fully understand how difficult it can be to be confined just at home; and we look forward to our daily contact calls with you all. It is so lovely to see everyone trying hard to keep up with some school learning each day and the fun challenges, which are being posted on Purple Mash and Class Dojo by the class teachers.

Social distancing can prove challenging, but we know you understand the importance of this in order to slow down the spread of the virus across the country. However, do not hesitate to get in touch with our staff if you are concerned or worried about anything regarding school and COVID-19.

Locally we do have some positive cases and we wish all those families well for a full recovery. This does highlight the need to follow the Government guidelines and keep loved ones and ourselves safe and well.

I am also writing to you today re: the latest updates from the Government and as a reminder re: the Government guidelines for **social distancing** and the expectations around schools being open.

The information from the Government on Sunday March 22nd is very clear:

Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do



Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Alongside this is the advice and guidance for vulnerable people. As I wrote in the Newsletter last week:

As you are aware, it was announced yesterday (19th March 2020) that schools will close however schools need to provide 'childcare' for the following groups.

- *If both parents are key workers e.g. teachers, NHS workers, frontline services, delivery services.*
- *If a child is 'vulnerable' which also includes children with Educational Health Care Plans.*

The guidance stated for the schools to risk assess the needs of their vulnerable pupils with EHC plans and following this we were able to determine, along with yourselves, that our children with EHC plans can safely remain at home, as the guidance explained in response to the question: **“Do all children and young people with an EHC plan need to continue at school?”**

“children and young people whose needs can be met at home, namely those who are not receiving personal care from their educational settings, or whose limited need for personal care can be met in their family home.”

We appreciate you all working so closely with us, trusting us to risk assess in order to keep you and your child safe and well; and in particular we fully understand your wish to keep your children safe at home, minimizing the risk of spreading the virus.

However, we are aware that the peak of the virus could well be within the next 10 – 14 days. Social distancing and staying at home is so important.

Today we have confirmation that there is suspected Covid-19 cases within 3 of our families, and therefore, we have taken the decision to remain fully closed until the Easter holidays, we will then of course, review the situation along with the rest of the country and in line with Government guidelines and recommendations.

It has been a difficult decision, however, we are naturally concerned about your children and their emotional well-being. All children are particularly vulnerable at this time and we know anxiety levels are already higher than usual. To manage this, we do feel this is best managed, safely within the family home.

Social distancing can be difficult for children to understand, despite all the work everyone is doing around the spread of germs etc; we know they are missing their relatives, especially much loved grandparents. Within the school setting we feel this would be particularly difficult for them. Imagine them needing a hug of reassurance and unable to have it! We do not believe your children should be put in such a distressing situation.

We do know it will be a difficult few weeks ahead, but we need to stay as positive and as strong as we can. Do keep in touch via phone and email with family and friends. Keep talking to each other and keep as well as you can – do make the most of this sunshine in your garden or with a daily walk at quiet times – remember the 2m distance rule!

We are continually keeping up to date with Government guidelines both for families and for educational settings.

We will update you regularly as key things change.

One final update – we are waiting further information regarding free school meals for next week. As soon as we know how what that will look like, we will be in touch.

We are not far away – just at the end of a phone line and we hope to catch up with you all very soon after the Easter holidays, if the situation allows us to at that time.

Take good care everyone,

Kind regards,

Mrs Dodd and the Staff Team