

03.04.2020

Dear Parents,

I wanted to start by thanking you all for your help and support during this most difficult period of time. We understand and appreciate how difficult this is for everyone concerned, and the huge impact that this has on families and on the children and young people.

Easter Opening

As we approach the Easter period schools are being asked to do something extraordinary – to remain open, where possible, to continue the provision for the identified groups of pupils where needed. As I emphasised in my last letter, any provision in our schools is based on the first principle that **first and foremost we are all being advised to follow the advice to protect ourselves, our families and the wider public by restricting travel, ensuring that we follow the personal care and hygiene guidelines, and restricting our contact through self-isolation and social distancing where appropriate and where possible. If children and young people are able to stay at home during this period of time, they should do so wherever possible.** This has to be the starting point of all the decisions that we make and will be the basis on which we have to look at our opening for Easter.

Where at all possible many of our schools will be open over the Easter period for those who have been identified as needing this service. Where we have difficulty in providing staff, or where the number of children has been so low that we felt it would be detrimental to the child and the staff we have had to make some tough decisions about how, or if we can open. Our decisions have been based on safety first for the children and young people, and for the safety of the staff concerned also.

In order to ensure that we can meet the need of some of our children we have taken the decision to amalgamate some of our schools onto a single site where possible. You will be aware that provision for Lydiard and Ridgeway children is operating from Ridgeway's site.

Where we need to close a school for a period of time due to insufficient staffing, or very low pupil numbers, we have been advised by the Government to work with the Local Authority to find a placement at another local school. **If this is the case, you will be contacted by your school who will let you know where that placement will be and for how long.** If we have to go down this route our schools have been asked to ensure that 1 member of staff is present at that temporary placement school to support your child while they are there. Where this is possible we will ensure that this is the case. If we do not have sufficient staff we will ensure that you are informed of this.

Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday

Due to staffing arrangements and low pupil numbers some of our schools will be closed over the whole Easter weekend. Provision at Ridgeway Farm's site will continue over the Easter break with the exception of Good Friday and Bank Holiday Monday – our schools will be closed on those days.

Further Guidance

Updated information from the Government is available here, with a Parent's guide to the school closures.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures>

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

We envisage starting term again on **Monday 20th April** with the same provision as we currently have in place. If there is any change in Government policy or the Covid-19 Plan we will ensure that you know as soon as possible.

Home Learning

Whilst this will be a very unusual Easter we believe that it is really important for families that we mark a real difference between the 'term-time' and the Easter break. In order to do this **we will not be setting any home-learning during this period of time.** This will allow time for the children and young people, and the staff to not be focused on school activities, and will give everyone a break from 'school-work'.

To ensure that our school staff also take some time to recharge over what would have been the Easter break we have enabled them to take their statutory holiday around the time that they will now be working in or supporting the school. This will mean that, whilst we will be starting to deliver some home-learning on Monday 20th April this will gradually increase to our current provision over the first couple of weeks. We hope also that this will give you all a little 'breather' from the balance of being at home, working from home, home-learning, and caring for family.

We are grateful for the support of our parents in enabling our staff to have this time to rest and recoup so that we can reduce staff sickness and can continue to keep our schools open.

Thank you once again for your support in helping us slow down the spread of the virus, and your patience as we work together to manage this challenging situation over the coming months.

I continue to hold you all in my thoughts and in my prayers.

Take good care of yourselves, and your families and I pray that you stay safe and well throughout this crisis.

With kind regards, and many thanks

Jez Piper

CEO

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'Let your light shine' (Matt 5:15)