

Dear Parents,

I hope you continue to keep well during these difficult times and have managed to enjoy some rest and relaxation during the Easter Holiday period.

As we head into the Summer Term, I am writing to update you on the current situation.

School continues to remain open for a very small number of pupils whose parents are key workers just as it did during the Easter Holiday period. School remains closed to all other pupils as the period of lockdown continues. This is an unprecedented situation and, as such, we are working towards effective ways of working and supporting our children, families and staff during this time.

Current government guidance is that these are 'extreme and exceptional circumstances.' Therefore, curriculum responsibilities have been temporarily lifted from schools:

*Emergency legislation will lift curriculum requirements for schools, giving flexibility to provide support, activities and education in the way they see fit... We recognise that many schools have already shared resources for children who are at home and are grateful for this...DfE is working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support directly to parents, including online resources they can access for their children at home.*

DfE document: 'Guidance for schools about temporary closures'

### **Our School's Position**

Whilst curriculum responsibilities have been lifted, we are keen, as a school, to support our pupils with their continued learning and to offer guidance to parents/carers about appropriate ways of doing this. We also wish to support, as best we can, with the pressure many families will have during this period of time when their children are at home.

### **Guiding Principles**

Whilst we are happy to help, we believe it is not possible to recreate a full primary curriculum through online learning and/or sheets of paper-based resources—a level of practical exploration is key, due to the age of children. This is especially true of younger children where play is essential to learning.

We appreciate the challenge many parents/carers will face when they are both working from home and looking after their children.

We are committed to supporting with the continued education of our pupils however, we are not able to replicate exactly what would happen in school and don't expect parents/carers to do this either.

We believe the emotional well-being of all our children and their families is paramount at this difficult and uncertain time. We would encourage parents/carers to be mindful of this and prioritise this alongside any educational activities they choose to do at home.

Our response and what we can offer is in light of our particular school context, including circumstances of staff, e.g. self-isolation, illness etc and our commitment to support the children of critical workers. Clearly, these factors impact on what staff are able to do and when they can do this. Many staff are working onsite to support the children of key workers.

There are currently some new duties schools are responding to, the extent of which the general public might not be aware of. This has some impact on staff roles and capacity.

### **An overview moving forward**

All class teachers have uploaded an overview of suggested activities to their class homework page on the school website. These will be updated on a weekly basis. In addition, other supporting resources are suggested in the 'Homework' section of the website.

- After the Easter holidays weekly activities will continue to be available and in place by 12 noon on each Friday for the next week's learning. Some longer-term projects may be uploaded and staff will explain these on individual Class DoJo pages.
- As education professionals, teachers will share what they feel is an appropriate amount of activities/resources for the majority of children in their classes and for the situation we are currently in. We won't be able to respond to requests for more activities.
- If a staff member is ill and unable to work or absent due to bereavement etc., we cannot guarantee that work will be uploaded weekly. We will do our best to cover this but, due to the current situation, this might not be possible. In the event of this happening we would refer parents/carers back to the information provided by Class DoJo and the school website together with the resources provided by the BBC and those available on the 'Oak National Academy on-line learning platform.
- The Homework Section on the school website will be updated with resources and activities linked to well-being on a regular basis. We hope you find this section helpful.

The school email address: [st-margarets@durham.sch.uk](mailto:st-margarets@durham.sch.uk) will continue to be monitored and can be used for any urgent queries. Again, this is dependent on staff availability and there may be a delay in our ability to respond.

We don't want work shared via online learning to become something stressful for our families and something they feel has to be completed. Instead we are offering this as a support to families and ask you to choose what is appropriate for you to complete with your children, depending on your individual circumstances.

For updates, please continue to use the dedicated Homework section of the School Website: <http://www.st-margarets.durham.sch.uk/homework/>

I offer my best wishes to all of our children and families and my thanks to the staff who are working tirelessly to offer care for the children of key workers and to provide ongoing educational resources.

Stay safe and stay well.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tait