

Monday 23rd March 2020

Dear Parents

Welcome to a new week. I hope you were all able to get some rest and spend time as a household over the weekend. As a staff team we are sending everyone our very best wishes at this difficult and challenging time.

First of all, may I please extend a huge message of thanks to all of you for your patience, understanding and support as we navigate these new and uncertain times. The messages of support have kept us going and we are very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to contact us.

Keeping a sense of togetherness as communities will be a challenge during this period however it has been touching to see the range of inventive ways people are already beginning to do this.

We have had a number of contacts regarding several issues that I will endeavour to address in this letter. Please appreciate that any guidelines we receive are often updated on a daily basis so what I write now, may well be different tomorrow. I am grateful for your patience and understanding.

Department of Education Guidance to Parents

We have been asked cascade the following information to parents.

From Friday 20 March schools, childcare and other educational settings are closed for everyone except:

- children of critical workers
- vulnerable children

We have published guidance for parents and carers:

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

Essential Critical Workers

The list of essential critical workers and associated guidance around this issues can be found at;

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

There have been some questions regarding the provision of supervision for the children of essential workers.

The guidance clearly states;

'The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.'

'That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.'

'Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.'

Stuart Carlton, our Local Authority director of CYPS, over the weekend has stated:

- **If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.**
- **Keyworkers must only send children to school when they are actually on rota working for the employer, not at other times.**
- **Keyworkers should not send them to school if their partner, or similar, is able to look after them.**
- **There is an expectation that if keyworkers are working from home the default should be to keep children there, rather than send them to school.**

So far, it would seem these key messages are being understood and acted upon and for that we are incredibly grateful. In anticipation of your continued support of this I thank you.

To help us manage our care provision in school we are asking parents to support us by;

1. Emailing us by 1.00pm each day to inform us that they have no other choice but to use the provision the following day. This will help hugely with only bringing in necessary numbers of staff.
2. Collect children when you are able during the day when shifts finish.

Once again, thank you for your understanding in this very difficult situation. We must do everything we can as a community to help each other and keep us safe from harm.

Essential Critical Workers – Easter Holiday Provision

We are working closely with the local authority to support families of key workers during the Easter holidays. It is likely this will be a local hub model at one or more schools. I will update you further when I have more information regarding this.

Learning at Home

If you have not yet had chance to look at the information on our website please do by visiting;

<http://follifootandspofforth.co.uk/home-learning/>

For as long as we have capacity to do so we aim to keep up daily electronic communication to parents with ideas, suggestions and work for children. We will send this by 6.00pm for the following day to give parents a chance to digest, interpret and prepare as best they can.

We completely understand the wide range of contexts parents and families find themselves in at this time. Some parents may have just one child at home and be able to dedicate the whole school day to supporting them. Other families may have several children of varying ages and be trying to work from home simultaneously. We appreciate access to technology including printers will vary between households. When setting work we are taking into consideration the wide range of contexts we know exists and trying our best to adapt and consider all of these. We are grateful for your patience.

In line with our advice, routine can help however this does not mean all children must be working or doing the same work at the same time. For families with more than one child children could work on different aspects at different points of the day to share the necessary resources. This is absolutely fine.

As the families working in this way on a day to day basis you are likely to be finding inventive and creative solutions to the various different scenarios. I encourage you to share these solutions with each other via your networks. We are of course here to take your feedback and will do our best to help overcome challenges. We would also be happy to receive your top tips especially for supporting multiple children. Please email these in to admin@spofforth.n-yorks.sch.uk or admin@spofforth.n-yorks.sch.uk and we will share these as we continue this journey together.

The aim of the daily contact with ideas, suggestions and work is to help guide, advise and support some degree of routine and structure at an unsettling time. Please trust your parental judgment as to what will help you and your children most at this time. This may mean picking out elements of the ideas, suggestions and work to follow up on. This may mean allowing the children to follow their own interests and projects. All approaches will support your child at this time.

We are doing our best to monitor the class email accounts. In relation to contacting staff via these please bear in mind the following;

- We are emailing out to both first and second contacts using the contact information given in our management information system. If you need to update one or both parent contact details so the emails go to the correct person please email the respective administrator – admin@spofforth.n-yorks.sch.uk. Or admin@follifoot.n-yorks.sch.uk
- Staff are working from home under the same conditions as most of our families, trying to work and make provision for their own children or dependents.

Some parents have expressed concerns regarding their children's progress over the coming weeks/months. I would like to do my best to put your minds at ease. No children will fall behind simply because no children are surging ahead. No children are being taught in the usual manner.

Our greater concern is avoiding loved ones falling ill, rather than children falling behind. This year will go down in history and we are all in the same boat so please let your children do what they can in terms of the work set. Please do not worry about the work that the children are missing as everyone is in the same situation. When we are all back together we will work closely with children and their families to support children's ongoing progress.

Final thoughts..

As mentioned at the start of my letter keeping our community spirit and support of each other at this time is a very important aspect of our work. One lovely idea being shared on social media is to draw or paint a rainbow and display it in a window that can be seen from the street. Families can then go rainbow spotting as they take local walks.

It would not be Easter at our schools without our decorated egg competitions. We would very much like to keep this tradition going including prize giving. We are proposing that children can still decorate their egg or eggs as they usually would and take a photo to send to us.

We will judge entries and award a prize for the winner in each year group at each school. We will then deliver or arrange a collection point for prizes. If you feel it is not good use of food (which we know is a little harder to come by at present) to decorate eggs then please just draw your design and this will be judged the same as constructed designs. Please can pictures be emailed by 5.00pm Wednesday 1st April. Good luck.

I will continue to keep you updated and informed, so please keep an eye open for emails and if you miss them, do please visit our website. I really hope that you and your families manage to stay healthy.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Griffiths