

19/03/2020

Dear Parent/Carers,

Further to my letter yesterday, I write to update you with the latest information regarding the coronavirus epidemic and the profound implications it has for all of us. Let me please let me reassure you again that we are doing everything we can to ensure that all our children and their families are supported as best as possible in the coming, uncertain future.

School Closure

As you are no doubt aware, as part of the country's ongoing response to coronavirus, we have now been instructed to close the school from Monday 23 March 2020 to everyone except children of key workers, children with social workers, and children with Education, Health and Care Plans. As advised by HM Government, we will do all we can to remain open with a reduced provision for these children.

To ensure Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust as a whole can make the appropriate arrangements for such reduced provision, we will be asking you to please complete the 'COVID-19 Reduced Provision' survey, a link to which will be emailed to you tomorrow. Through this survey you will let us know the details we will need to determine if your child will still be able to attend school, and to allow us to make suitable arrangements. You will be able to let us know if your occupation (of both parents/carers where appropriate) falls into one of the key worker categories defined by government. We will be in contact again as soon as we have collated all the necessary information from the survey and have arranged the reduced provision that we will be able to offer.

To reiterate, children who do not have a social worker, or do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan, or who are not the children of key workers, should remain at home with appropriate care, so you should not send your child into school from Monday until further notice. Any student who does not fall into the category of exempt children but attends school from Monday 23 March 2020 will be expected to be collected from school immediately.

We will re-open fully as soon as we can, and will let you know when this is via our school communications.

SATs, GCSE, A-Level and other examinations

HM Government have confirmed that all assessments and examinations have been cancelled for this academic year. To be clear, this means that any student who was due to sit examinations this summer, will no longer do so. The secretary of state for Education stated in parliament yesterday that HM Government 'will work with the sector and Ofqual to ensure children get the qualifications they need'. We believe that a statement specifying the details about how students will be awarded their grades will be published tomorrow, and we will of course communicate such details with you.

We are, in short, desperately sorry for our students, many of whom are understandably inconsolable. Of course, these are, in every sense, extraordinary times, but that still does not dilute the disappointment our students must feel, nor the levels of uncertainty about

their futures that they will inevitably be wrestling with. I want to reassure them — and you — that we will do whatever we can to support them, as best we can, despite the challenges ahead that face us. Their hard work, and that of their teachers, in preparing for their examinations will not go unrewarded. Yes, we must wait for the details, but the skills they have learned and the knowledge they have acquired will live with them forever, and as the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education have both categorically stated, they will ‘get the qualifications they need’.

Remote Learning

Your child’s learning throughout this period of school closures remains, of course, important to us, so we will continue to make every effort to help your child continue learn while the school is closed. Firstly, all parents/carers, should ensure that School Gateway is working as this will be the main method of communication between home and school. Any issues should be directed to the school administrator, so they will be able to support and troubleshoot any access issues.

- Learning will be set for children for each subject at the beginning of each week and sent to you via school gateway. There will be a timetable template for you to complete and return to the school administrator each Friday as a record of the learning that has taken place. The school website has a page titled Covid-19 Home learning, which the teachers are populating with resources and video tutorials.
- It is up to you and your child to decide in what order to complete the work across the week. It is also important that they adhere to the lesson timings and break times, and avoid the temptation to ‘overwork’ or, indeed, to do too little.
- It is important that children keep routines as normal as possible and follow a structure at home that mirrors the structure of their learning at school. This will make their return to school in the future easier for them. Please support your children to follow and adhere to this structure, as some will inevitably find it difficult.
- We expect children to attempt the learning activities and work set, as best they can.
- We are also in the process of finalising an additional document that we will provide you with that lists a range of other superb online resources that you may use that are free for access. A range of organisations have made their online platforms free to use during the coronavirus, so we want to make sure that all our children will be able to benefit from such.

Free School Meals

HM Government have confirmed that they are ‘developing a national approach to providing support through supermarket and shop vouchers [and] will provide further details shortly’. We have, nevertheless, been exploring ways in which we can effectively support our students who receive free school meals in the meantime, during the period of closure, and will be in touch again once we have finalized arrangements. As you can imagine, such arrangements in such a rural location are complex and take a little time.

Extra-Curricular activities

To reiterate the information I provided yesterday, for clarity, all off-site visits, extra-curricular activities, and sporting fixtures will cease with immediate effect. In light of the closure of schools nationally, and the current undetermined length of time for which this measure will remain, we will review the situation as and when new information is received. Whilst it is also likely that where schools hold an enrichment week activity programme, this will be cancelled, I would respectfully request your patience in respect of our decision in this regard.

Links to current advice

(Please do check these pages regularly as they are updated constantly.)

- NHS Health information and advice
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Guidance for educational settings on COVID-19
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>
- Ofqual's 'further' statement on coronavirus re Examinations
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-a-further-statement>
- Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
- Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable people at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

I hope that through this latest update I have been able to address any questions you may have had. Again, to reiterate, the advice and guidance provided by relevant government departments is under constant revision and is regularly updated. Please do continue to regularly monitor this advice, using the links I provide again above.

I thank you again very much for your continued support in these extraordinary times. If you have any further concerns that you feel we may be able to help with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Look after yourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Whittleby

