

 **Ripponden Junior and Infant School**

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 ***Deputy Headteacher: Miss Lucy Taylor***

***“Challenge and enjoyment leading to excellence for all”***

**Headteacher: Mrs L Bamforth**

20th March 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, schools across the country will close today.

To help the fight back against COVID-19, on Monday, we will begin providing childcare for those employed in the Government’s Key Worker group.

**Staffing Structure**

As we have a number of staff self-isolating, staffing will be organised on a rota system to ensure that we can safely manage the care of frontline workers. Busy Bees will cease to exist for ‘normal’ service and is also cancelled for the Easter holiday. It will, operate however for the Key Worker sector. To ensure that we have adequate levels of staffing, if you haven’t let us know if your family falls into the Key Worker group – please do this as a matter of urgency. If the children of Key Workers are having a school dinner, this will be provided by the kitchen. Please bring the children down to the Busy Bees entrance from 7.30am and pick up from there any time up until 6pm. We have sent an email out regarding your childcare needs – please make sure this is completed so we have adequate staffing levels.

**Responsible Usage**

The core objective of our child care will be to help vital services continue to function whilst ensuring the best possible levels of social distancing are maintained. Where possible we ask that all children stay at home. In particular, we ask that parents of eligible children observe a responsible usage approach by keeping their children at home when they themselves are not at work, and in the first instance seek support from their partners, friends or other family members (excluding those in vulnerable groups such as the over 70s).

For example, we would not consider it responsible use for a child to attend school whilst one of their parents was not a key worker and could be at home with the children. A corner stone of the Government’s strategy remains social distancing; the more people our children and staff are exposed to, the greater the likelihood of them becoming infected, which may ultimately result in schools being unable to continue providing emergency childcare altogether.

We are also mindful of the fact that most of our staff are also parents. As such, whilst they are working at Ripponden, they may need to ask their children’s schools to provide childcare for them. This in turn will lead to… you get the idea. We are basically trying to avoid teachers looking after teachers’ children who are looking after teachers’ children. All of which leads to a decrease in social distancing.

Your children will be bringing Home Learning Packs home this evening. The purpose of these is to consolidate what children have been learning at school. We don’t expect that children should sit doing these activities for 7 hours a day. However, we do believe that your child will want to engage with learning activities.

Over the coming weeks more and more learning materials will become available. For example, we heard about learning programmes for every year group are to be made available soon on the BBC iPlayer. Over the weekend, I will be uploading online learning materials onto the school website – each class page has a ‘Home Learning’ tab – resources will be accessible from there.

These are uniquely difficult times, unprecedented in our time. There is a lot of anxiety around at this time, both in adults and children. We’ve found a lovely child-friendly story which I have shared in assembly this morning and you might like to revisit it in the coming  days and weeks.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18NT_KELO4ZY3UNGrwX7KgIo4noWtEUD9/view?fbclid=IwAR1sXhFJgrbGwX-m1oyur9OmGP5zSvX-AOwQ7eWdn36ooKj2yQ-Fwg3V_Og>

You may have worries about what the next few weeks are going to look like as a parent with a child, or children, isolated from their friends and classmates. Please do not be anxious about whether you are completing enough learning-related tasks or about not being able to support your child’s learning. You know your child better than we do and will find the best way for your family.

So, if your child is reluctant to engage with the activities today or tomorrow or at any point in the next few weeks please let it be. Go and share a story, pair all the socks in the spare sock basket, explore the contents of the second drawer down, paint your faces or your nails or count the birds you can see flying past the window. Give each other a hug and enjoy each other’s company.

These are uniquely different days. Your child may not remember what you did or said during these days, but they will remember how they felt and it is imperative that they feel safe. So, the learning materials are there to help your child spend their days away from school on a healthy variety of tasks. It may help each day at home to begin the day with a little “planning meeting” of what you are going to do and then to decide the order in which you’ll do them. And remember to include break-time for your child and yourself.

We know that most of you are not qualified teachers. But we know that each one of you have been your child’s main teacher since they were born. Who taught your child to walk? Who helped your child to talk? Who taught them how to play peek-a-boo? Who taught them to tie laces, tidy their room, say please and thank you? Who taught them values that have helped to shape them and will help them through this difficult period and beyond? Who taught them to be the amazing

young people we see in our school every day. You did. And you have done an amazing job so far. And will continue to do so. If, sometimes over the next few days or weeks it’s difficult to get your child to complete work, take a breather, avoid confrontation, reflect on the big picture about what is truly important and come back to it when you and your child are ready.

So over the comings days and weeks our hope is to help you to support your child as much as we can. We are social creatures and it will be difficult for your child not to see their friends and classmates, as it will be difficult for you too. Whilst we didn’t seek this challenge, which will cause us to make changes to how we live for now, we will get through it.

Tomorrow school closes to all but a few. But we will continue to be in contact with you. As we can’t guarantee that there will be office staff manning the telephones, we have a mobile number, which you are able to contact us on. This number will be active during usual school hours and you can ring this if you need anything, as usual. This number is **07399 326030.** I will also be checking the emails at regular intervals during the day. Please feel free to contact us at office@ripponden.calderdale.sch.uk. Children in Key Stage 2 all have an email address and staff may email them directly from time to time.

We are planning to keep in touch with each of our families through “wellbeing” calls at least once each week. We will also email parents should there be any news or updates. If there is anything we can do to support you do let us know, we genuinely want to help, if we can. Email us or call us and keep an eye on the school website.

The main priority with this situation is that we all keep safe and whatever happens, please know that me and our fabulous staff send our love and thoughts at this strange and unsettling time.

Many thanks for your continued support and lovely, warm messages we have received – it means so much.

With all very best wishes,

Lorraine Bamforth

Headteacher