

*Parents and Carers of
Children and Young People*

Surrey County Council
County Hall
Penrhyn Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 2DN
2nd April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We wanted to take the opportunity to write to you at what we know is a sensitive and worrying time for all families. During this time of crisis, the Government has made it clear that the primary focus for our school leaders, teachers and support staff is to care for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. We are proud of the way our schools have risen to the challenge. The vast majority of schools in Surrey are open for these children and will continue to ensure that there is provision available for them throughout the Easter break and bank holidays. It is very important that we all follow the government guidance to minimise the spread of Covid-19, which means staying at home unless it is absolutely essential to leave. This will save lives.

Schools have been working extremely hard to provide innovative ways that children can access learning at home. We have been so impressed with the examples that we have seen so far. Many schools have also gone above and beyond in supporting their local communities, last week some of our schools came together to gather their PPE supplies (goggles, aprons, gloves, sanitizer) for distribution to NHS frontline staff; a large number of schools have been providing hampers of food for their most vulnerable families and pupils have been writing personal letters to elderly residents in care homes. These are just a few of many examples of generosity we've seen.

The resilience shown by your children's schools over the last few weeks has been truly remarkable and we are sure you share our heartfelt gratitude for how school staff have responded to this outbreak. Everyone has total commitment to ensuring that this unprecedented situation is handled as well as possible. We recognise how challenging this crisis continues to be, as we seek to find a way through and to find a new normality.

We must remember that this is not education as we have ever known it. SATS, GCSEs, AS and A level exams, as well as Ofsted inspections have all been cancelled. Whilst schools are putting in place processes and resources to support children's learning at home, it is important to remember that it is not possible to replicate a usual school experience at home.

Many schools do not have the resources to do this and we know that children and young people have very different home circumstances. Some will have good access to the internet. Others will not. Some will have access to outside space. Others will not. In addition, many parents are continuing to work at home and must balance their work demands alongside supporting their children's learning. We are working with our schools to support them to provide home-learning and to support you as families.

We have been made aware that while a great majority of parents have been exceptionally supportive of schools and teachers, some have been critical where they feel the support offered does not meet their expectations. However, the reality is that unfortunately no remote learning offer, regardless of how sophisticated it may be, will replicate the typical school day. We know it is a big ask of all parents throughout the country to take an active role in supporting the education of their child at home, and schools are providing all the resources they can to support parents to do this. We also recognise that many teachers are parents themselves and will have their own demands and pressures, and some may also be unwell. We would urge you to be supportive and compassionate with our school leaders and staff and remember that everyone is doing their best in these uncharted waters.

Here are some helpful resources available to support families during this difficult time, including advice on how to keep children safe online and how to help children understand and cope with the difficult circumstances. You can also keep an eye on our dedicated coronavirus webpage for more updates and useful information:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/coronavirus

[Keeping children happy and safe online during COVID-19](#)

[Government guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

[Talking to your child about coronavirus](#)

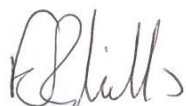
[How to look after your family's mental health when you're stuck indoors](#)

We know that this is an extremely unsettling period for you and your children, especially those due to sit exams, leave school or move to new schools later this year. Please be assured that schools will continue to do everything they can to support pupils during this difficult time.

Please continue to support your school and teachers and trust that we all are committed to achieving the best we can. It is so important that we view one another's decisions with human compassion and understanding.

We wish you and your family well and hope that you stay safe during this time.

Yours faithfully



Liz Mills
Director of Education,
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Surrey County Council



Julie Iles
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Surrey County Councillor, Horsleys

