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### **Coronavirus Update #18**

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents,

This week we have seen up to 117 children in school each day with increased numbers of key worker children as more of you return to work, and more vulnerable pupils as we support more families. To make this happen we had to close our open offer to all Year 1s on Tuesday and open new bubbles. It has been lovely to see more old faces and the atmosphere in school has been very relaxed and good natured as children get stuck into learning with teachers and teaching assistants.

Given the above changes, please can parents of key worker children in Reception please remember you must now book your child in and cannot just turn up on the day. Thank you.

Yesterday the government released its guidance for how all children will return to school in September. In light of this and in advance notice, the first day back for children after the summer holiday will be Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September. To help with your preparations, it will be back to wearing uniform.

To help with the practical preparations required for the September start, **the last day of school before the summer holiday will be Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July, not Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July.** I am aware this might cause some difficulty for some of you and that it is quite late notice. I only received confirmation on Wednesday from the DfE that I could go ahead with this. It is a decision supported by governors and it is one we haven't taken lightly.

As you are probably aware, we have been open every day through lock down, including the holidays (apart from weekends and bank holidays). Not all schools have managed this. To make this happen required a lot of practical physical changes to the school classrooms and site in general. For example, we have a few classrooms that are closed due to being used as storage for equipment that was moved from other classrooms and corridors to create additional space.

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 17<sup>th</sup>, staff will be in school using these 2 days to restore the school to its new September normal state so that we are ready to welcome back all the children. This is no small task and will still likely take time in the summer holiday. The guidance released

yesterday by the government will necessitate careful consideration of how we re-organise the school and continue to minimise risk while having all children on site. These preparation days will be essential in helping us be ready and will be impossible to complete with children on site.

Spending these 2 days sorting will also mean we can use our 2 staff training days on the following Monday and Tuesday for planned non-Covid curriculum work. It's really essential we spend this time on our core job of teaching and learning.

With the easing of social distancing measures in general across the England, I hope you can find the support from friends and family to help you care for your children during these 2 unexpected additional days. However, and I really would like to stress *however*, if you feel it will be impossible to care for your child on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July and / or Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July, please contact the office directly and request to speak to me. In case of exceptional need, we will endeavour to do something to help. I wish we could do more and I'm sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

### Keeping in Touch

There have been more livestream assemblies this week as teachers bring together children in school and out of school. These have been much enjoyed by children and it has been great to see more old faces and hear stories about home learning and adventures. Look out for your links next week to further assemblies. If your child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2, you will receive a *Zoom* invite by email. If your child is in Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 or Year 6, invites will appear on Google Classroom for a *Google Meet*. Teachers are still getting their heads round this new technology but they will be very happy to help with any questions from your end and remember we have our IT help desk which is open 9.30 – 11.30 Monday to Friday. Please email [ithelp@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk](mailto:ithelp@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk) and one of the IT help team will get back to you.

### Transition Arrangements

Our transition arrangements to help prepare children for the September start to school are progressing well. The new class taster groups are really helping to ease children's worries as they see their friends again, meet their new teachers and familiarise themselves with school. Our new staff rota also ensures that children of key workers and vulnerable pupils who are already in school are now having their lessons with their new September teachers. Some of our children have also been taking part in additional enhanced transition in smaller groups or 1:1 with their new teachers such as meeting for lunch, a walk round school or a chat over a game. All these arrangements will continue to the end of the academic year and will help us to welcome back all pupils in September in a calmer, less-anxious manner. If any child misses out on any of these transition arrangements for whatever reasons, teachers will be in touch to arrange a face to face livestream meeting either with *Google Meet* or *Zoom*.

One parent on the gate told me how just having the one day in school has helped with improved behaviour and happiness at home.

Our transition for the new Reception starters in September is also under way. As we aren't able to invite them in before the summer holiday as we normally would, we are offering an enhanced 3 week transition in September. There is a 'New Reception Starters' page on our website under 'Parents and Carers' ([quick link](#)) that includes a welcome film to replace our normal welcome evening, a parent handbook, arrangements for September start, a school readiness poster and information about our school super heroes. These parents have also received a starter pack full of key information and documents. Our Reception teachers have also just started on their epic 60 Zooms to meet each family which replace the normal home visits. I would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs Russell and Miss Watkinson for putting this comprehensive transition package together.

### End-of-Year Reports

Your child's reports were handed out to children who have been in school today and yesterday. Or, you have been in to collect them. Any that have not gone out will be put in the post today so look out for these.

### Successes, Challenges and Support

An interesting observation from teachers is that those children who have been lucky enough to have been in school for longer periods of time during lockdown are really thriving emotionally. The small groups have helped them develop their self-confidence and enabled teachers and teaching assistants to better help children with more personalised learning.

Home learning is also proving successful for some children. One child commented to me this week in response to how he was getting on: "9 out of 10 for home learning...but it's not like school which is 10 out of 10". We are discovering benefits to remote learning such as its potential to support with homework next year. Once our review of this is complete, we can work out what we'll keep and what we will bin. If you've not already done the surveys sent out by Mrs Turner and Mr Marchant, please do complete them as it will help make sure we do the best job possible for your child in the future.

I know it is really challenging for many of you at home and I'm sorry we can't offer more than we are doing. Under the current government guidance, we are working at our maximum capacity. If it's any help, this link takes you to a course that's free to parents in Torbay and Devon to help support you with advice on dealing with challenging behaviour at home:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/archives/9906>

As mentioned last week, I know many of you have concerns about internet safety given the increased amount of time children are online. I have asked teachers to add this to their to-do list for in-school support and home learning in the short time remaining before the holiday. I know it featured in today's Year 6 livestream assemblies for example. If you are looking for help,

please see our website home page which is a great place to start. You might want to share the *SMART Crew* video with your children also which provides an excellent animated film that children can relate to: <https://www.childnet.com/resources/the-adventures-of-kara-winston-and-the-smart-crew>

A new e.book called '[My Back to School Bubble](#)' has been produced which aims to help children understand the protective measures in place at school, in an age-appropriate way. It reinforces public health messages including the importance of hand and respiratory hygiene, while reassuring children that everyone makes mistakes, helping to combat feelings of anxiety. [https://ebug.eu/eng\\_home.aspx?cc=eng&ss=1&t=Information%20about%20the%20Coronavirus](https://ebug.eu/eng_home.aspx?cc=eng&ss=1&t=Information%20about%20the%20Coronavirus)

### Virtual Sports Day!

If you're looking for a reason to get your child off the screen and outdoors more, we are offering an unusual and exciting innovation with a virtual Sports Day open to all children. There are 7 events to compete in at home with results to be submitted by 26<sup>th</sup> July. If you would like some variety to the home learning and a chance for some healthy competition (results will be shared), have a look under our *Home Learning* page under *Virtual Sports Day 2020* or click here for a [quick link](#)

### Covid-19 – Stay Alert

- A quick link to all government advice: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- A quick link to questions and answers related to tomorrow's planned changes in England:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do-after-4-july>
- A quick link to all the guidance for schools:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>
- A quick link to handwashing advice, including video:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
- For the latest information on *test and trace*, follow the link:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youre-contacted-after-testing-positive-for-coronavirus/>

Department for Education helpline for parents - phone: 0800 046 8687,  
Email: [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk), opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday) and 10am to 4pm (Saturday and Sunday)

Very best wishes to you and your families as always,



Tim Hughes (Headteacher)