

Barewell Road
Torquay
Devon TQ1 4PA
admin@st-margaret's.torbay.sch.uk
01803 327090



Coronavirus Update #7

17th April 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope you are all keeping well and managing to stay strong through this tough time. If you haven't yet seen our 'LET'S SMILE' page on the website, now is a good time to have a look. Thanks to Mrs Turner and Miss Pritchard, staff have put together a film message from us to you. You can also read about lots of other smiles in our Smiles in April, Smiles in March and the inimitable Mr Thomas's Selection Box. There are some really lovely stories of kindness and joy to keep us all smiling which are well worth a read.

We especially need those smiles as we found out yesterday we are continuing in lockdown for another 3 weeks at least. The good news is that the actions we're taking by staying home are having a positive impact on Torbay Hospital and the spread of the infection. So stick with it everybody; we're getting there.

This week we have seen a slight increase in the numbers of vulnerable children and children of key workers attending school. There have been between 26 and 34 each day. To support this we have slightly increased our staffing and reopened another part of the school to help with social distancing. Please can I appeal to you to only send your child to school if they cannot safely be cared for at home so that we can keep to the minimum numbers of children and adults in school. Thank you for your understanding.

Home Learning

While staff and you are all doing our best to continue educating, we recognise that these are extremely stressful times and the demands of home learning might be adding to the challenge. So I would like to offer you some reassurance. Please don't worry unnecessarily about home learning – give yourselves a break and don't be too hard on yourselves if you're feeling overwhelmed. When the children finally return to school, teachers will assess any gaps and start afresh from that point. These are unprecedented times and we can all only accomplish so much.

If you want any help with any aspect of the home learning, we are here to support. You can always email the teacher using classname@st-margaret's.torbay.sch.uk or email the office team on adminteam@st-margaret's.torbay.sch.uk or phone school on 01803 327090 from 8.30 – 12.00 each day. If it's IT help you need, email ithelp@st-margaret's.torbay.sch.uk.

If you want packs of learning posted out please let the office or teacher know before Friday. From next week these will be printed and packaged up to be posted to you every Friday so you will hopefully have them in place for the start of learning in the following week. While there is no expectation to return work in the post, you are welcome to do so and if doing so please address to the class teacher on the envelope.

If you have children in different year groups in the school and you're finding it a struggle to meet all their needs via different teachers, feel free to just choose one teacher and use that work for each of your children if suitable. There is always a choice of task so this might work well, especially for children with similar aged siblings.

If your child is finding the work too hard, let them choose an easier task. In Maths, you can use this link to select a different year group: <https://whiterosemaths.com/homelearning/>

If you have more than one child and only one computer / ipad, use a different browser for each child (e.g. Internet Explorer, Chrome and Firefox). This way they can take turns during the day by just clicking their chosen browser and not having to start from the beginning each time.

If it's all too much and too hard to access, don't stress, just let it be and focus on the basics of reading, spellings, times tables – it doesn't have to be what the teacher has set.

Free School Meals

I am aware there is some confusion about free school meals. There are two main classifications: Universal Free School Meals (UNFSM) and Free School Meals (FSM). UNFSM applies to all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 who are entitled to a free meal during term time. FSM applies to any child from Reception to Year 6 who is entitled to a free meal in term time because their family claims benefits. School receives funding for every FSM child which is why we encourage you to sign up even if you are UNFSM.

In the last week of the spring term when schools were forced to close, we provided food boxes for UNFSM and FSM. At this point there were no government plans for providing boxes or vouchers in the Easter holiday. It was assumed that we would start up with our boxes again after the Easter break in normal summer term time even though we would be likely closed still.

In the first week of the Easter holiday, the government announced its voucher scheme for starting after the Easter holidays but only for FSM (I'm guessing they thought it too expensive to do UNFSM also and wanted to prioritise the most in need). Schools could either choose to sign up for this or do the food parcels. We decided to do the parcels as we had already started complex food chain organising.

Then, on the middle Saturday in the holiday, the government changed its mind and said the vouchers could also be issued for the holiday period - again only for FSM. So at the start of the second week we signed up to get a 2 week voucher for our FSM for the holiday only. Lots of schools nationwide did so also and the company providing the vouchers couldn't cope with the demand. It took our office staff nearly 3 full days to sort it. In the end, our FSM parents should have got a 16 digit code from Edenred for a £30 voucher for each child that could be spent at a named supermarket of their choice. (The £30 = 2 weeks)

Now, this week we are back in school term time and we are back to boxes (no more vouchers) which can be collected every Wednesday from school for FSM children only. The next collection is Wednesday 22nd April as follows:

- Group 1: **9.30am** – If your child's surname begins with **A – H**
- Group 2: **10.00am** – If your child's surname begins with **I – P**
- Group 3: **10.30am** – If your child's surname begins with **Q– Z**

It is not too late to sign up for FSM and with the dire changes in some families finances, many are doing so. This below link takes you directly to the Torbay sign up page or if you might struggle with this, please contact the office for any help.

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/fsm/>

Food Poverty

With more people now finding themselves in food poverty, twelve voluntary organisations who provide community food support are now working together as *Torbay Food Alliance* to provide a co-ordinated response to this need.

If you are struggling to feed your family or know others who are, please phone the school office and we will do our very best to help, for example by making a referral to Torbay Food Alliance for you.

Mental Health

Looking after our mental health during this time is a priority. The **Every Mind Matters** website has some great articles about this such as *7 Simple Tips for Working at Home*.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

The **Good Thinking** website is for adults looking for resources to support their mental health and wellbeing. It is a resource full of excellent links. <https://www.good-thinking.uk>

The **Anna Freud Organisation** has a dedicated website page giving advice for parents and carers about how to support their families during the coronavirus pandemic. The page has several links to documents mentioned elsewhere on this resource list, as well as comprehensive answers to commonly asked questions. <https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/>

Covid-19 Reminders and Updates

The key message is still to **stay at home** and only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home). If you go out, stay 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people at all times. Wash your hands as soon as you get home. Do not meet others, even friends or family. You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

If you have a new and continuous cough or a high temperature stay at home for 7 days if you live alone, stay at home for 14 days if you live with others, including all household members. Only use NHS 111 if your symptoms get worse or are no better after isolation. Guidance on what to do while staying at home if you have suspected coronavirus can be found here by clicking this link to the [NHS website](#).

The most up to date guidance for parents can still be accessed via this link and it includes lots of questions and answers that you might find useful:

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

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

Updates on COVID-19 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

For games and resources about good hygiene and bugs, try the e-bug website which is being run in conjunction with Public Health England. [Click here](#).

Very best wishes to you and your families,



Tim Hughes (Headteacher)