



St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Head teacher: Mrs. C.M. O'Hara B.Ed DPSE(Mus)



Thursday 19th March 2020

Dear Parents,

School Closure

In line with advice from Public Health England, St Mary of the Angels will be closed to all pupils, commencing Monday 23rd March 2020, until further notice. The reason behind this is to reduce the risk of infection and to delay the spread of the Corona virus.

There will be a small number of children whose parents will have been or will be notified, personally, by school by Friday afternoon, who will be able to attend school with a reduced work force. These pupils are a nationally defined group who match with clearly identified criteria; there is no favouritism or subjectivity in this choice. We ask that all parents respect key roles in society and recognise a sense of public duty to rally and support the common global goal, here.

How can I help my child to learn during this time?

In school we have talked about how the world (the planet earth) is unwell and needs to get better. We have said that we need to help, by staying apart for a little while but still carrying on with our work. We have tried to let children know that there is an end in sight. Please try to allow them to share their thoughts with you, so that you can allay their worries. Your child will receive a pencil and an exercise book to use during this closure. Each Monday and Wednesday you will receive an email from school with details of work to be covered by your child. This will have been well planned out by staff and, with help, needs to be completed. Encourage your child to get dressed and be ready to work; to write the date each day, in their books. They may not need to record much in the books, but it is there if they need it. It is difficult because they will initially feel in "holiday mode". We need to be aware of the need to think about "school" differently whilst this period of time lasts. Start as you mean to go on. ☺

Your children may feel stressed. lethargic, unsure, nervous, excitable... the list is endless. Reassure them that these are normal feelings under the circumstances; be understanding, but encourage engagement in their school work positively and daily. Reward them for their efforts and as much as possible, and try to retain an air of normality and expectation to "do your school work". This will support positive mental health and continue to challenge consolidation of the key skills that we need to develop in the primary setting, during this enforced enclosure. These key skills include: reading, writing, number proficiency, problem solving, communicating (orally and in writing), reasoning, improving skills and knowledge from starting points, interacting with others, resilience, personal challenge and resilience

Parents, it is a real call on your parenting skills now, to work in partnership with school as directed, overcoming the changes and lack of teacher and teaching assistant support; it is literally down to you to use the advice to motivate and inspire your child/ren and to foster an attitude of resilience and determination. Those who follow advice will flourish; those who do not receive that support will fall behind, inevitably. Teachers and support staff will be working on a daily basis too.

How much work will be sent because we only have 1 lap top?

Expectations need to be reasonable; governors and SLT have agreed, in line with other settings, the following:

EYFS (Nursery and Reception) will be set work for approximately 1 hr each day. They will need to read, play, exercise and talk, with others also, as part of their ongoing learning. Your children are very good at online games and activities; we are therefore, playing to their strengths at this difficult time.

Y1- Y6 will be set work for up to 3 hrs each day. They also will need to play, exercise, talk and read, as part of their ongoing learning. Your children are also very good at online games and activities; we are therefore, playing to their strengths at this difficult time.

Can I choose to do something different instead of the work sent?

Yes and No. Parents and families will have various ways of motivating their children, that work. That is to be encouraged as effective for a positive sense of wellbeing and effective for children's personal sense of achievement. Additional activities that play to children's interests more are to be actively encouraged to prevent boredom and lethargy. However, just like we need to respect the medical profession's advice currently, we strongly advise that you respect the expectations and levels of challenge for your child, from experienced teachers- as set out in the weekly plans.

How will I know about my child's progress and areas to develop as parents' meetings will not be able to take place?

Newsletters will be sent on a weekly basis, as normal. Their format will change, through necessity, however they will keep you up to date with anything you need to know. They will also let you know about written reports which will be sent out to replace parents' meetings, in due course. All staff will be required to work remotely or in school. They will be very aware of the children in their class and will be tailoring the work that they do to the needs of your children- they are really good at that.

Can I communicate with school as normal?

Yes, there will still be our postbox email, which will be opened on a daily basis. If you would like to send any photos or news about your children's home learning, to inspire others, then please do. I will include any such good news on the weekly newsletter. Any genuine worries or complaints can be addressed through postbox – please do not email staff directly.

Phones will be manned as best we can, during the day but please recognise that, like you, we will be working on a reduced staffing force due to people self isolating, declaring legitimate vulnerabilities and also looking after their own children at home.

Our website, as I write, is being upgraded, thanks to EES for schools and Mrs Ward. Details will be with you shortly and we will also be posting information on there for parents.

Please avoid being overly critical or fussy- we are all in this together and I appreciate that it is difficult for you. We will do our best in trying times. Please let children feel that you are in touch with schoolteachers. Let them see any communication shared so that they too feel part of the wider community.

What if my child is sick- do I need to register them as ill?

If your child is unwell, then you are already at home so you do not have to report their "absence" form school. If they are not accessing their work for long periods of time (days), please keep a diary which can be shared if requested as we move forward, to explain their progress.

When will school re open?

The Government have said that schools will close until further notice. When further notice is given, then we will communicate that directly to you, just as we have done today.

On the children's return, they will need to bring their exercise book back in with them. Not all work done will be in their books so don't worry. It is just there when they need it. Please encourage your child to work as hard as they can. Please also encourage a positive approach to all of the activities, especially handwriting and written work (neat presentation).

I am not worried about my child, but I am worried about others who will really struggle. How can I help?

I know that there will be many of you out there who will already be exercising a supportive, caring approach to each other. Thank you. Please continue to use social media to "touch base" with families socially and to keep laughter and humour flowing. Please also consider parents who are working on their own- they may need an extra phone call occasionally to reassure them that they have not been forgotten.

In school, we are already actioning support for the most vulnerable pupils too. St Mary's never cease to impress me when it comes to team spirit and helping those less fortunate- now is the time to shine again, in that respect.

Thank you in anticipation. Stay safe

Yours sincerely

C.M.O'Hara