

9th April 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

What a wonderful week of sunshine and warmth we have had. I do hope this has helped keep your spirits high and allowed you to enjoy the 'holiday' despite lock down restrictions.

We have had another set of great days at the Willows. I am pleased to say that staff and our key worker children have remained well and have had some lovely times together in school. We have been outside a lot; Easter Egg hunts and eating chocolate have been a highlight and of course lots of Easter crafts have been undertaken as well. Our staff have been amazing giving up their holiday time to care for the children, every pupil has been a credit to their family and our school community.

Looking forward to next week, as you know, next Tuesday we are 'back to school' – remotely! Staff have started thinking about some activities for the children again. We have no idea how long this will be for but are working on a day by day, week by week and month by month basis!! It could be up to 13 weeks (the whole of the summer term), therefore we have to be realistic in terms of what teachers set and what we can expect the children to do, and you as parents to facilitate!! Mr Byrne recently sent me a tweet which said, "You are not working from home, you are at your home during a crisis trying to work," which I think sums it up perfectly. You could even add a comment onto the end of that tweet about trying to 'homeschool' too! The vast majority of our parents will be in this situation, and so are our wonderful staff!

The message I want to send out to all our Willows community is that the main aim of the next few weeks is to stay safe and consider the wellbeing of all their family members. While we will set activities for the children to try and complete, the aim of these activities will be for the children to hopefully have fun completing them, and parents should be reassured that they are not expected to 'teach' their children.

Therefore, a daily maths themed activity along with English based activity will be set. They might not always be 'formal', it could be a maths game to play with the family, links to online games, a TV Countdown challenge (for both maths and English) etc etc... Some of these activities may be repeated as the weeks progress. The staff and I feel that starting a new 'theme' remotely is not appropriate, therefore, an additional a daily 'creative challenge' will be set. This would be a great opportunity for children to broaden their general knowledge, for example - name the continents and oceans of the world; simple historical enquiry questions; maybe a fun science activity. It could be as simple as a photography challenge, play a board game, bake a cake, an art idea etc... These activities will continue to be posted on the school website under the 'Children's' and 'Class Pages' tab.

We feel the importance of exercise has well and truly been covered now, so we will not be setting specific daily physical activities but would encourage you to use your gardens, local parks and online resources for example; '5-a-Day Fitness', 'Joe Wicks - the Body Coach' and many others to keep fit and active. Websites such as 'Bug Club', 'Mathletics', 'TTRS' etc... are still there and can be used but might not necessarily be 'set' by teachers.

We would like to develop some interaction with the children over the coming weeks. The children will be missing their daily routines, contact with their friends and of course with their teachers. Mr



Byrne is exploring ways to allow pupils to show staff what they are doing and enable teachers to respond to children on an individual basis. He is researching a secure and safe online facility, which will allow children to upload pictures, text, videos etc ... of the activities they have been doing, the teachers will then be able to make simple comments back. Appreciation of what the children are doing will hopefully help motivate them to continue. We may even be able to set activities for the children to complete through this platform in the future too. Staff are working hard at familiarising themselves with this possible new way of working. Mr Byrne will communicate with you all via email in the next week or so when we are ready to get it all up and running.

In the meantime, may I wish you all a Happy Easter. As I have reminded you in my 'Blogg' today, remember to be kind to yourselves and each other.

Take care, stay well and happy.

Mrs Warren