

19th March 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Yesterday's announcement for all UK schools to close until further notice was expected but has certainly brought an even greater sense of reality to the situation.

I am sure you will see difficulty in the decision, as whilst the instruction is to close, there is also an instruction to keep schools open for Key Workers and frontline services. The Prime Minister has instructed us to do this to ensure that as many children and families can be at home and limiting social contact as much as is possible, while the country fights the virus. Our role in this is to support this decision and as gut wrenching as it is to do this, it does mean closing the school to a percentage of the school community. Please understand that this decision has not been made lightly but we must all support the fight against the virus and ensure as a community we pull together and do what is asked of us. This does mean that we must stay at home as much as is possible and this should not be treated as a school holiday. The expectation will be that the home learning is engaged with, completed and treated as important as a regular day in school. There are a lot of variables to consider in limiting school access and we have planned to do the following:

1. Identify the number of children that will need access to school to enable those in frontline services to ensure the country and community can function and those who have high level SENd with an EHCP.

If you are a Key Worker and need to have your child at school so that you can work, please inform the school office by email or phone as soon as possible so that we can ensure sufficient staff are in school. We are awaiting definitive guidance on what constitutes 'key workers'. For now, our working definition is that key workers include NHS staff, teachers, police officers and PCSOs, prison officers, probation staff, armed forces, social workers, firefighters, workers in logistics (transport, delivery, refuse collection etc.) and civil service personnel. If you feel you are a frontline service not part of this list, please let me know. Mrs. Ramsden (our SENCo) will be in contact regarding provision for pupils with a SENd.

We realise that this will be troublesome for some parents/carers, but we cannot start making individual arrangements in the interests of fairness, consistency and still achieve the purpose of academy closures (minimising social contact). Please be considerate and do not put us in a difficult position by asking us to accommodate your child if they do not fulfil the criteria, forcing us to come into potential conflict with you by saying no. Any child that becomes symptomatic will be sent home to self-isolate.

As we will need to plan staffing, we will need to know in advance which pupils we will have in attendance. Therefore, if you are intending to send your child to the academy during the period of closure, please email the academy with the following information or return this form. All responses must be received by 1.00pm on Friday 20th March please.

<i>Request for child to continue to attend academy</i>	
Name of child:	Year group:
Name of parent/carer:	Contact details (email ideally):
Reason for request (delete as appropriate): my child has an EHCP/I am a key worker	
Occupation:	
Employer:	
My child will attend: every day / some days / occasionally	
(If some days or occasionally, if possible, please indicate dates of likely attendance for the next two weeks)	
My child is eligible for Free School Meals: Yes / No	
If eligible for Free School Meals, I would like you to provide a hot meal for my child: Yes / No	

Upon receipt of the above form, we will assess the validity of your request, confirm by return email the attendance arrangements and then be able to establish daily registers of pupils. If you indicate that your child will attend and this changes for any reason, please let us know. Apologies for having to be so prescriptive about this; we know you will understand why this is necessary.

2. Deploy a limited staff team in the school to deliver a limited curriculum to those children of frontline services

In order to ensure we are limiting social contact, we will only have a very limited number of staff on site. This will enable the large majority to isolate and reduce the spread of the virus. Most staff will be working from home, ensuring the online learning is planned and they are available to support. Staff in school will be providing and ensuring the school is ready for re-opening.

3. Provide distance learning through the Purple Mash website, the SIMS parent app and home learning packs for those who are unable to access the internet

Pupils working from home will follow the same timetable as those in school and will need parental guidance for this. Please ensure you help us keep consistency for the children. The work will be closely monitored by experienced teachers to ensure it is suitable and appropriate. It will be an evolving system and will have teething issues but working together, we will ensure this is a success. The Purple Mash platform can be accessed from a mobile phone, tablet or laptop. Those who haven't got this access can access a hard copy for home learning and these packs will be available on Friday 20th March after school at 15:30 in the KS2 hall.

Home learning will be prepared weekly and shared via the SIMS Parent app. Work will be assigned for workbooks or on Purple Mash. Log ins have been shared in packs that will be distributed on Friday 20th March. Any parents of children who are currently not in school can collect these resources after school on Friday 20th March.

Parents will be expected to read the commentary and ensure that the children complete their learning activities. Online support for this will be available between 10.00 am and 12 noon daily via the class email addresses below. Please only use these for curriculum support.

Australia@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Brazil@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
BurkinaFaso@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Canada@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
France@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Srilanka@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Kenya@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Peru@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Adventurers@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Explorers@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Spain@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
England@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
India@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
Italy@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk
thehub@st-marys-folkestone.kent.sch.uk

4. Provide a breakfast and hot lunch for those families who are in receipt of Free School Meals or recent financial hardship

All pupils who are eligible for a FSM will have access to a hot, take away meal each day. I have ordered take away boxes for this but if you have your own re-usable box, then please bring this along. Food will be served between 12 noon and 1.00 pm. No food will be available after 1.20 pm. We have started to telephone all families who may be in need of this to get numbers. If you are not in this category but are in financial difficulty due to redundancy or unemployment due to the Corona Virus, then please let us know and we can try and help.

5. Provide regular contact with the school to ensure continuity of the children and families

Schools are amazingly busy and vibrant places. Your children will be used to a routine and may start to miss the contact and sense of belonging a school brings (as may we all). For this reason, we will ensure a team of staff are designing resources and creating opportunities for contact. There will be regular updates on Facebook and the school website, as well as opportunities for daily worship, daily family activities and celebrations of our home learning. We will develop a platform for pupils to share their learning and projects to inspire and motivate us all, as well as keep a sense of community and connection. We will also share weekly videos for key strategies for the core subjects to help you help your child.

Safeguarding and other urgent concerns

There may be a need for parents/carers, pupils or staff members to urgently contact senior staff about safeguarding issues or other pressing matters during the period of academy closure. Very shortly, we will publish on our website and email out to you details of how you can make such contact by telephone or email. We are finalising arrangements and expect to be able to publish these by close of business on Friday.

The team and I love this school, the children and our community. This situation is so far from anything that any of us have experienced. I want to thank you all for your patience, your support and continued calm and collected approach.

We have managed to maintain good attendance since this has started and the children in school have been happy and full of life and laughter. They are a credit to you all and will be missed so much. Please do keep in touch, send us an email or message or if you are feeling alone – call us. We will answer. Our whole community is in our thoughts and prayers. We hope you are all able to navigate the next period of time with minimal difficulty and we look forward very much to when our big school family can be reunited and return to normal. That time will come, we will be ready, we will be stronger and we will party!

Good luck and God bless.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor North
Principal