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Coronavirus Update #9

1st May 2020

Dear Parents,

Despite the school closure, there is still lots of school work going on in addition to the home learning. For example, this week teaching assistants started on a programme of training (led by Mrs Pike and Miss Watkinson) to develop best practice in how to help children learn. They had two online training sessions exploring effective techniques around helping children to scaffold their learning and will be developing this further next week.

There is a hugely impressive amount of self-learning taking place during this time by staff right across the school as individuals take this opportunity to train themselves up with a wide range of certified online courses from food hygiene to mental health to curriculum to attendance to pastoral to sign language. It is going to be one of the many silver linings from this coronavirus challenge that when we return to business as normal, we will have a staff body who have each enhanced their skills and knowledge to the benefit of your children.

Teachers made a start on your child's end of year report this week. These will be coming out towards the end of the summer term and I'll update you later.

School Governance

We have a change of chairperson to our board of trustees. Due to work commitments, Jonathan Dickson has stepped down and James Bennett has taken over the reins. On behalf of the school we are very grateful to Jonathan for his work in helping the school move forwards. He has been a great support and it is excellent news that he is continuing on the board and will therefore continue to help the school with his expert knowledge around finance in particular.

Thank you to James Bennett for stepping in. For those of you who don't know James, he is a parent at the school and has a background in social care. He already makes a significant contribution to school improvement and is exceptionally well-placed to take the school further forwards with his wide range of experience and knowledge.

The role of a school governor has changed dramatically over the last few years. In a nut shell, it's like an unpaid extra job that often requires a lot of investment of personal time. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes, during the school day and in the evenings to ensure the school continues to

improve. Consequently we are very grateful to all our expert governors who invest in St Margaret's to improve outcomes for your children.

Newsletters

Have a look on the LET'S SMILE page on the web to see our 'Smiling Newsletters'. Your children's teachers are taking it in turns to put these together each week to celebrate and share the home learning, and to help keep children in touch with their friends and what's been going on. There are newsletters for each phase in the school: Reception, Year 1/2, Year 3/4 and Y5/6. You can see photos, stories, news, recipes, challenges, fun facts and messages from the teachers.

There is also the weekly entertaining 'Fun Newsletter' created by a different teaching assistant each week with a message to the children, activities and games.

We are really fortunate to have such an amazing bunch of staff who go the extra mile like this and with the above mentioned self-led learning. A huge thanks to them to all! Click this link to go direct to the [smiling newsletters](#). Keep an eye on the monthly smiles page as well where you can find lots of other celebrations and successes such as our Hearing Support Centre continuing to teach children face to face online.

Free School Meals (not including Universal Free School Meals)

During the Easter holidays we signed up with Edenred to provide our Free School Meal families with an eCode, which in turn could be redeemed for a supermarket voucher. This wasn't without some teething problems but eventually, most parents received their eCode. The problems we did have were usually due to having the incorrect email address on file so it is very important that you update us if your email address changes.

We have now decided to continue with the voucher system rather than the food boxes until further notice.

Please keep an eye out in your emails from Monday for your eCode. Your eCode will be for £15 per week, per Free School Meal Child. It will be sent from Edenred (not St Margaret's Academy) and will, more than likely, be found in your junk/spam box. There are instructions on how to redeem your eCode within the email.

Please note however that although we have ordered the eCodes to be sent out each Monday, there does seem to be quite a delay so please be patient.

Food Poverty

This continues to be the number one issue that families are dealing with in Torbay. **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.**

Beware of Scams

Sadly the outbreak of Covid-19 has seen an increase in scams and doorstep traders who are trying to exploit fear and uncertainty during this difficult time. Testing kits and cures, doorstep crime, refund scams, financial scams and donation scams. You can read more detail about this on our website under 'Well-being in Action' – 'Coronavirus Updates, Guidance and Help' or by [clicking here](#)

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](#).

As always, very best wishes to you and your families,



Tim Hughes (Headteacher)