



3 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

General update

I hope this letter finds you well and that you and your families are keeping safe. As we come to the end of our first two weeks in our new arrangement, and with the Easter break coming up, I wanted to update you on various things.

The first two weeks of our current arrangements

Many of you have been in touch to thank staff for the efforts they have gone to in making resources available online and, where necessary, in hard copy. Your thanks have been well received and are appreciated.

After a few initial teething difficulties for some in accessing or making sense of the resources, things appear to have settled, with teachers and senior staff responding to queries and requests as required. If you experience any difficulties beyond this, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

By and large, most children are making very good use of the materials provided. We are monitoring this and will contact parents after Easter where we have concerns. We have held back from doing this thus far, sensitive to the fact that each household's circumstances will be different. However, with the current closure looking set to continue for the foreseeable future, it is important that all children continue with their learning, so that none will have fallen unduly behind their peers by the time of return.

In school itself, we have had low numbers of vulnerable children and those of key workers attending each day. We took the decision to accommodate both our schools' children at the middle school from the start of this week and this has worked well.

The Government has provided answers to frequently asked questions around the closure of schools, which you can find [here](#).

Easter

Over the two week Easter break (Monday 9 April to Friday 17 April) we do not expect your son or daughter to do school work at home (other than if they have not properly engaged thus far or are particularly keen to continue working). School will remain open during this period for our vulnerable children and those of key workers who need the provision.

Free school meals

Parents and carers of children entitled to free school meals have been written to separately about arrangements. Please respond to the separate email as soon as convenient.

Staying safe online

Given the current circumstances, children and young people's use of the internet is greater than ever and this creates more opportunities for others to prey upon them. It is essential therefore that we – parents, carers and teachers – take steps to ensure they remain safe.

To this end, please make yourself familiar with the resources and guidance we have made available on our website - <https://www.hexhammiddleschool.co.uk/index.php/online-safety/> - and discuss these with your child. Stay aware of what they are accessing online. Concerns can be raised with us and/or via [Childline](#), the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) and/or [CEOP](#).

Other sources of information include:

- [Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Net-aware](#) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)

Beyond this, please note that we have updated our child protection policy with an annex that reflects the current situation. This will be available in the [policies](#) section of our website from Monday. Please refer to this if you have any safeguarding concerns. Also, please also note the image at the end of this letter that Northumbria Police asked us to share with you.

Useful learning resources

In addition to the resources being made available for your child by their teachers, Northumberland County Council's School Improvement Team has developed 'padlets' of home learning resources, which are being regularly updated. You can find these [here](#) for general learning and [here](#) for those with additional needs.

Trips and visits

We previously wrote to you to advise you that we had decided to cancel all school trips until the end of April 2020. At present, the Government hasn't changed its [guidance](#) so this remains our position.

Although it is looking increasingly likely that trips for the remainder of this academic year will not take place, we are reluctant to actively cancel planned visits until a clearer picture emerges as we run the risk of not being able to obtain refunds. We will continue to monitor the government guidance and keep you informed, and if we return to school before the end of the summer term, we will look at each trip on a case-by-case basis in light of travel advice in place at the time.

I appreciate that this doesn't give you any certainty at present, but hope that you understand why we are taking this approach. If you are due to make an instalment for a future trip that has not yet been cancelled, we recognise that you may not wish to do so due to the current uncertainty. We would instead recommend that you put aside this money, if you are able, until the position for that trip has been decided so that you are able to catch up with any instalments if the trip does go ahead.

For trips that have already been cancelled, we have begun the process of obtaining refunds from travel companies and making insurance claims in order to be able to refund parents. This is taking some time as many travel companies are being slow to refund us, and our insurers are receiving an exceptionally large number of claims. We will contact parents as soon as we are ready to make

refunds, and thank you for your patience. Once school closures have ceased we will look to see whether any of these trips can be re-arranged.

I appreciate that this will be disappointing to everyone who was looking forward to taking part in a trip. Thank you for your support.

This is enough detail for now. I shall write to you again after the holiday with a further update. In the meantime, take care and best wishes for a safe, enjoyable Easter break.

Yours faithfully



Mr G Atkins
Executive Headteacher



PREVENT

Who's educating your child online while the schools are closed?

Please keep a check on their online activity.

Useful online resources -
<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/radicalisation/>
<https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/northeast/>
<https://www.ltai.info/>
<https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>

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