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20 April 2020

Dear parents/carers

I hope you are well and have had a restful Easter. It was a most unusual 'break', but I hope you were at least able to spend some quality family time together. As we head into Term 5 (albeit in lockdown), I thought it would be useful to offer some updates and available information about the way forward.

These are, of course, unprecedented and extraordinary times for all schools up and down the country. All schools are trying to find solutions to the challenges of remaining closed, but open for the children of key workers, and provide alternative learning solutions for all of their pupils. As you will no doubt appreciate, different schools face different challenges in responding to the brief, and thus we are all doing our best to respond appropriately to the needs of our communities.

At Horsley, for now, we have opted to use Hamilton packs as a key home-learning resource. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, it offers the means to provide support for parents (as teacher-parents) and resource printouts for parent-led lessons. Secondly, Hamilton is also a well-established and respected name in education; like many other schools, we use Hamilton curriculums, and they work well for us at Horsley. Thirdly, by all following the Hamilton scheme, it gives our pupils broadly the same learning experience in the core subjects. This means that, when the children return to school (hopefully very soon!), they will have covered the same key content and be in a good place to resume classroom learning, picking up from where we left off. We want to support you with this as best we can, and can provide printouts for collection if internet access is an issue.

Staff are also 'on hand' via telephone if you need support. In the coming weeks, teachers will continue to telephone all of the parents of the children in their class. There will be another round of calls from this week onwards. This is time consuming for staff but, I think, an important job. Many parents I have spoken to have valued this and have been very appreciative of the one one-to-one dialogue and the opportunity for the teacher to chat directly with their child. Class Dojo is also being rebooted by teachers as a means of communication. Teachers are of course also coming into school at various points to cover for the children of parents who are key workers: the nurses, the social workers, etc. In line with government strategy, it is essential we continue to provide this support to our key workers.

We will continue to add resources to the website, although we are very aware that our website has limitations, and there are of course inherent problems with the internet connection in Horsley. Staff will be reviewing resources and we will be adding further links in the coming weeks. We want to be able to keep an open mind about resources. Yesterday the government announced that it was supporting a range of online resources for schools. We will be reviewing these ourselves and signposting where relevant.



Please continue with a structure that works for you and your child/ren, although a morning of English and maths is probably enough for most children. Naturally, as parent-educators, we will be able to add to our children's daily experiences by drawing upon our own specialisms and strengths, reflecting our own interests and values. This presents opportunities for children to receive lessons in gardening, textiles, cake making, or whatever we can offer as parents. My own daughter has had lessons in English and maths supplemented by rather a lot of music!

I am particularly concerned about the emotional impact of the situation on the well-being of our children. Staff will be eager to support you with ideas when they make their call. You may also be aware of a new free children's book about the corona virus by Alex Scheffler, which could be used to support explaining and talking about the current situation with your child (<https://axelscheffler.com/books-for-older-children/coronavirus>).

As regards the way forward? Like all schools up and down the country, Horsley is having to take each day, one step at a time. It is so frustrating for us all, and of course, we want the children back in school and back to some kind of normality. However, we will have to wait until the government and DfE tell us the next step. As we know, this information comes forward daily. The information is often made available to us all, simultaneously, via the media, and schools are not typically pre-warned about next steps or government strategy, so we have to respond as quickly as we can to this.

In these challenging times, text will remain a key means of communication. Please keep us posted if you change your telephone number, or if you need an additional number added to our system. Staff are in school every day. Emails and telephone calls will be picked up in the normal manner.

In the meantime, do take care of yourself and your family. Stay safe, and if you have any concerns, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Warmest regards



Gary Price  
Head Teacher

