

16<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents,

Now that the Government has moved to the 'Delay' stage of Coronavirus planning, I wanted to write to you all, to update you on the steps we are taking as a school community to keep the children safe by following the best advice available. We understand this is a time of worry for our whole country and all communities but by working together, sharing how we are coping and our plans, we seek to minimise that worry as much as we can. Whilst we do not have any confirmed cases of the virus amongst children or staff, we wanted to assure you what we are doing to be proactive and sensible to reduce any spread of the virus in the community.

### **Government Advice and Updates**

Like all schools in Torbay, we have been working closely with the Local Authority who have been keeping us regularly updated. We are also receiving and reviewing daily updates jointly from the Department for Education (DFE) and Public Health England (PHE) and continue to follow all of their guidance with regards to ensuring regular handwashing and hygiene within the academy. This can be a worrying time for our children as they have lots of questions about the virus and some of our children are telling us that they are worried after hearing information on social media or from different sources. We all have a part to play in supporting children and minimising their worry and we wanted to share with you what we are doing in school to help with this. Using the great age appropriate resources which have been shared with us by the Government, we are ensuring that children are having the support they need, the chance to ask questions, watch videos on handwashing and having the information they need to feel supported.

We know that families will want to also be talking to children about the virus and have attached the link to the resources page for these: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools>

If you wish to discuss Coronavirus with your child/children, there is an excellent Newsround programme available on line: BBC Newsround 'Coronavirus: Why it might not be as scary as it sounds' - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366>. I will update you when I have further information to give via our school website and Twitter feed. In the meantime you can keep up to date with national advice and Information regarding coronavirus by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

### **School Events**

As mentioned earlier, we are closely monitoring updates from the Government as well as considering how to best support you, our community. The Government has reminded us all about our responsibility to be proactive in slowing the spread of Coronavirus in our communities and hand washing is the main action for this. Alongside this, we are now going to be putting further measures in place at Ellacombe C of E Academy to try and protect our children, staff and indeed our wider community. This means that we will have looked at all events due to take place over the next two weeks before the Easter holiday and looked at the risks of each event. We have therefore taken the **decision to not go ahead with any of our planned Easter events** including the Church Service and Bonnet Parade. Whilst we know how much we all enjoy these events and children have been practising, we feel it is our responsibility to take steps to be proactive in supporting more vulnerable members within our communities. Teachers will be working with the



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children to explain these decisions tomorrow (as we wanted to let you know first) and thinking about how to still celebrate these special events. **Other events that will be cancelled include the Y4 Maths Parent meeting, Y2 and Y6 Residential Meetings, Celebration Assemblies with parents coming in as well as sporting events** where our children were due to be joining with large numbers of children from other schools. The Local Authority has announced that the **Torbay Schools Music Festival will be postponed** to a later date and many schools across the Bay are postponing or cancelling events. **Please note information about ticket refunds for The Torbay Schools Music Festival will follow when we have it.**

We will be working to minimise the disruption for children as much as possible and have not taken these steps lightly. We will be considering our options of how we can be best sharing the information that was going to be discussed at the above meetings and will be letting you know about this very soon. Talking to Head teachers from across Torbay, it is clear that most schools are postponing or cancelling events to minimise risk of spread of any infection.

### **Government Health Advice**

We are sure that we are all keen to follow the Government advice on self-isolation where symptoms are shown. Here is the link to this advice [Stay at home: guidance for people with confirmed or possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). Please contact the academy office should your child need to follow these steps. Our staff will also be following this advice and whilst we will be working hard to minimise changes or disruption to your child's education, we may need to accept there will be some inevitable changes. Again the safety and wellbeing of our children and staff are our priority and by following government guidance, we will be playing our part in supporting our community. As per our usual policy, if your child becomes unwell in school, we will be contacting you to come and collect them.

Please can we ask that our community continues to be respectful of one another and not to speculate should a child or staff member be absent from school. We were saddened that within our own school community we have received news that parents have been unkind towards others because of concerns regarding this virus. At this time, more than ever being kind to each other and showing compassion is key.

### **School Closure and Home Learning**

As we all know from the Government updates, **there are currently no planned school closures at this time.** We wanted to reassure you that should this decision be taken nationally; we are putting plans in place so that we would be able to communicate those to you directly from us as well. We use a wide range of communications with you and wanted to let you know that, in the event of Ellacombe C of E Academy closing, we would be contacting families in the following ways: email, update on academy website <https://ellacombe-lap.co.uk/>, My Ed app, Facebook and Twitter. If you think that your **email or contact details may need updating, please contact the academy office to do this. Please also ensure you have downloaded our My Ed App to enable you to receive updates immediately.** If you are concerned that you do not have any internet access, please contact the academy office so that further measures can be discussed with you.

We have also started thinking ahead with regards to any national school closures announced by the Government and thinking about home learning. We wanted to reassure parents that we are thinking about being sensible and practical with this. We are considering how we would do this and the main platform for sharing information regarding home learning your child could access, will be



on the website <https://ellacombe-lap.co.uk/>. Staff will be planning for this eventuality and using the online learning sites already used by children, such as TT Rockstars. If your child does not have a login for these sites, please contact your child's teacher so that your login can be updated.

### **School Clubs & Bagel Bar**

The Government has made it very clear that they are expecting the number of people needing to self-isolate is going to rise and this number could be high. At the same time of this, the Government does not wish to see schools close unless directed to do so by them. The Local Authority have advised schools to plan for having reduced staffing numbers and this means that we will be looking to do everything possible to keep the school open as usual, as well as paid breakfast and afterschool clubs. This will be kept under constant review. However, so that we can focus resources on keeping the school open, **we have had to take the decision to cancel all after school clubs with effect from Tuesday 17th March**. This includes all clubs, including sports, music and maths clubs. We are very sorry for the inconvenience this will cause families but I'm sure you understand the need to focus energy on keeping the school open, as asked to do so by the Government. Refunds for these clubs will be issued in due course, please bear with us whilst we make arrangements for this. Bagel Bar is hugely popular and we will be continuing to try to keep this going as much as possible, but it will be kept under daily review and be subject to the availability of bread and bagels.

### **Community Support**

The wellbeing and safety of our children, staff and whole community remains our highest priority and by following the Government's advice we seek to play our part in supporting our community through this challenging time. We know what a worrying time this is and fears of illness and any school closures are all part of this. I hope you will be assured to know that Ellacombe has volunteered to be part of a working group with Torbay Council looking at what support there will be in the community if schools close. This work will involve looking at how groups could work together to ensure resources like food could be available. We are proud that at this challenging time, we can pull together across Torbay for the support of all communities. I hope you are somewhat assured by the steps we are taking and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to talk to a member of the team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'E. Semmens'.

Mrs E Semmens  
Head of Academy