

19th May 2020

Dear Parent,

On Friday, we wrote to you with regards to our planning for the next stage of potential school opening on week beginning 1st June. The parent survey was completed by over 60% of parents whose children are eligible, thank you for doing this. Some of you wrote kind comments regarding our support as a school during this time and since we closed for most pupils on Friday 20th March. Many of you said that you would await further information before making a final decision and we will be communicating again with you this week in relation to this.

For now though, I wanted to look back and reflect on our work over the past nine weeks, giving you an insight into our work at Ellacombe. In lots of my letters, I've talked about home learning, wider support or even how we're supporting each other and our own families. But I now want to share more about our response as a school, since Friday 20th March.

During this period, the Government asked that schools be repurposed, to provide school places to children of critical workers and vulnerable children, which we have done. Our Trust site team have worked together to ensure that on every one of these days, including the Easter Holidays and Bank Holidays, the school was open and clean ready for our children. Our numbers have grown from just 5 to start with to now almost 50 through the week and the children who have been in have been a credit to our whole community with the way in which they've been supporting each other and adapted to new ways of working. The Government set out that schools' focus over this period, as well as providing these school places, was to support the safeguarding and welfare of all of its pupils and to 'support parents to help their child' so that they can have an element of learning. I've been incredibly proud of the tremendous and selfless work of the Ellacombe staff for their work to support these three purposes: school places, safeguarding and welfare support and home learning opportunities and wanted to share with you the scale of this.

To support safeguarding, welfare and indeed wellbeing, we've sought to connect and keep in touch so that parents have a place to seek help or reassurance from. As well as keeping the school open for those who are eligible every week day, including during Easter and the Bank Holidays, we've committed to having someone on the end of a phone or email every one of these days. This has been vital to our role in safeguarding and working to support the welfare of our families. You may well have been following the regular social media posts which set out the rhythm and pattern of the week, hopefully providing the children with a little routine fun! An enormous thank you to Mrs Davey who had been the expertise behind this and to our staff for all being happy to get involved. Thank you for your sharing too, it brings a smile to our faces!

Teachers have been making phone calls home through this period but wider than that, we make welfare calls involving 60 children very regularly, sometimes daily. Alongside this, we have been working very closely with partner agencies including social worker teams and the police. It is clear that the challenges being faced at the moment are very real for our community and include not just food poverty and challenges with mental health but family breakdown and domestic abuse. This is something that, as a society, we don't often talk about but it is very real.



Ellacombe C of E Academy
Ellacombe Church Road, Torquay
Devon, TQ1 1TG
T: 01803 293040 E: ellacombe@lapsw.org



TOGETHER WE EMPOWER EXCELLENCE



We have gone further than just the Government guidance with supporting families with food. Mrs Driver has been hugely determined to support parents with the national Free School Meal Voucher scheme, which has had glitches in the system. This includes regularly logging on late at night to try and order the vouchers when the system is not as busy and it is not unknown for her to sit in an online queue for up to hours at a time. As well as this, we've worked with our Trust catering manager to provide food hampers (made in our South Hams schools and driven up by her) for those who cannot access the food vouchers at all. We have been supported by FACT with food hampers and are working with Re4orm on a weekly basis, we have been distributing food for over 90 families. This happens twice a week, every week. This means 1,620 meals will have been distributed from 23rd March to the end of this week. Our entire leadership team, as well as our admin team and safeguarding team have needed to be focused on this welfare role. We've worked closely with Torbay Food Alliance as an official 'referrer'.

Alongside this, our teaching staff have worked incredibly hard providing home learning opportunities as well as the daily teaching of those within school. Following feedback from families, we've made these simple for the children to be able to do on their own, to reduce the burden on families. We've been busy printing packs for those who've been in touch and asked for them- this is now almost 50 a week.

As we now plan for potential changes from June 1st, we are very mindful of the amount of support which is needed to support safeguarding and welfare. The safety and welfare of our children and staff remains the top priority and we will continue to ensure we follow the Government guidance with this. We will be sharing more details this week about this but I hope that you have found this insight into our work helpful.

Thank you for your support for us, we are proud to be able to serve you, our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Semmens", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mrs S Semmens
Head of Academy