



Monday 23rd March 2020

Dear Parents

I have written so many letters to you recently and each of these has referred to government guidance, references to Public Health England, the Department for Education and such like. This letter isn't going to be about instructions, forms to fill in, or the like. And there's no guidance for a letter like this. I just want to reach out to each of you this evening, as I am sitting down reflecting on the past days and weeks, today being the first of our 'new normal'.

Firstly, I want to thank you for the support that you have given to the school as we try to navigate our way through such challenging times. The positive messages received have meant a great deal to the staff team and to me personally.

I am realistic enough to know that we will not have got this right for everyone. But what I can assure you of is that we are doing our very best and our commitment to the Barrow Hedges community during these difficult times will not waver.

As a school we have focused on what we do best and that is to work together and concentrate on the children's learning. It has been wonderful to see that so many children have logged onto their virtual classroom today. I would like to extend my enormous thanks to the staff team for the hours and hours of work put into Google Classroom and our admin and premises team for their flexibility and positivity in supporting me and my fantastic leadership team.

And so, a word about 'home schooling', It's been day one in my household so I have also been juggling working from home and two young children! I absolutely empathise with how some of you may be feeling; well, if those of you feel like me and that is somewhat overwhelmed! I just wanted to say that yes, we are filling the Google Classrooms with all kinds of activities and opportunities for learning. We have chosen our jobs as educators and so that's what we want to do. But equally we absolutely appreciate that for some of you there's too much, for others it isn't quite as you might have expected or what you have wanted. I guess we have all seen the chat and memes on social media about distance learning! Please know that there's no rule book for us on this. We had no warning to prepare – some parents have thanked us for the weeks of preparation we have put into this, but this was only set up last Tuesday (17th).

So with that in mind, please bear with us. We are checking the school email as frequently as we can to answer your queries and this remains the best method of contacting us. This is only the first week of using our virtual classrooms so we know that these will evolve as we work together and find better ways to communicate and support the children's learning. We have already received some feedback about parents' desire for their children to be in contact with one another due to concerns about missing their friends. This is something we can look at once things are a settled a bit. Just one thing, please remind



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your child(ren) that their comments should be appropriate for the context they write them i.e. all members of the class can read them, including their teachers!

But my key message is that you as parents have always been and will always be your child's prime educator. We can only encourage you to engage with the learning set, but understand and respect that you may choose to spend this time with your child on alternative activities.

When your child is at school we differentiate learning to suit his or her ability and required next steps. We can't do that so easily now. Therefore we are providing plenty of choice and plenty of suggested websites. Your child is likely to need time to adjust to this so by all means, dip into some of the websites provided in my letter (sent on Wednesday 18th, which can be found on the website) to ease you in to the daily activities.

For anyone really panicking (!) we are all in this together and if today has made you anxious about the prospect of home learning please remember that the following would be a good guide for a day or across the week:

Reading – never too much!

Writing – anything! A diary, letter to family and friends, even a comic strip

Practical hands on maths – can include cooking, measuring, games.

Fine motor work – lego, cutting, playdough

Physical activity everyday!

Something creative – musical or arty

Generating independence – researching facts for a project, preparing a presentation

Life skills – helping with organising, tidying, cleaning!

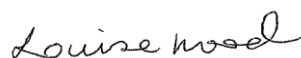
For younger children, lots of role play and imaginative play

It breaks my heart that we have said goodbye to our pupils without knowing when they will return to school. We know that the children will be finding this confusing and that you will probably have had some difficult conversations; made all the more tricky because the adults don't have the answers either.

I close by letting you know that however distant, we are still one community and we are here for each other. Do not hesitate to contact me via the school email (office@barrowhedges.com) should you need anything at all.

Keep well and stay safe.

Kind regards



Louise Wood

Headteacher