



Executive Headteacher: Mrs C Wilson M.A (ED)
Associate Headteacher: Mrs L Wood
Fir Tree Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 2RA
Tel: 01635 42129 Fax: 01635 230484
Email: office@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org

Friday 20th March 2020

Dear Parents,

I wanted to write to give you the latest update with regards to Fir Tree Primary School's response to the current COVID-19 outbreak. As with the government advice on Wednesday evening the school will be closed after Friday for the vast majority of children. We were given further guidance earlier today regarding those children who are permitted to attend school on Monday and have made provision for these pupils at Trinity School.

Teaching and Learning

During the school closures, work will be provided for children by their class teacher. Your child has come home with a pack of work and have been talked through online learning by their class teacher – this should last them for the next two weeks.

Next week we will be letting you know when our 'Home Learning' section of our school website is up and running. In this section there is a page for each class, including the AS Resource. Each class teacher will put up a suggested timetable to help you structure the day of learning if you wish as a guide. We will then email you weekly from the 3rd April to let you know when the next set work and activities are available for your children on the page.

Also on this webpage you will have the facility to contact the class teacher and they will then be able to reply back to you via email. Class teachers will be accessible via this method daily from 9am – 3:30pm.

In addition to this, all children have been shown how to access various online programmes such as Nessy, PurpleMash and Times Tables Rock Stars where relevant and MyMaths for Year 6 – they have all been given their passwords and logins, but do contact the class teacher if you have any difficulties with these. Again there is a section on the school website under 'Parents' called 'Online Learning' where you can access these websites/programmes.

Work set will be across a range of curriculum subjects and we are keen for children not to be in front of devices for too long! Your child should already have been sent a work book to use and, if directed by the teacher, work should be placed within it. There will be no weekend homework set, however if your child would like to do some work then please feel free to try the many resources shared in recent letters.

I also launched to all the children (and staff) in assembly this afternoon 'The Fir Tree Challenge'! I really hope this is another useful resource to help the children stay focused, but to have fun too. I have asked them to send photos or evidence to their class teachers or to office@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org as I intend to write to you regularly throughout the closure and it would be nice to share some of the challenges within our school community. I have attached the challenge to this letter in case your child has not shared it with you.

We appreciate there may be some technical issues along the way – please do not worry if you have elements which you may not be able to access. We have sent a comprehensive list of websites that are also available our website under 'Letters' that you can use if you are struggling for ideas, have a technological issue or just want to occupy your children with fun and educational activities. However I know that social media it awash with ideas and programmes that you can use.

We understand that this situation will affect people in different and unprecedented ways. Our intention would be to encourage children to complete the activities set by teachers but we fully understand the various constraints, which might be upon families, parents and staff – particularly those with young children and older relatives and of course working parents who may or may not be at home.

Staff will try to be available during normal school hours and as mentioned earlier in this letter you will be able to contact them via the website and we will notify you via text when this is up and running. We would ask parents to be sympathetic to the fact that some of our staff are also parents and under the same stresses as yourselves so you may not always get an immediate response to an email.

Safeguarding and SEND

As always if you are worried about the wellbeing or safety of a child you should contact either Mrs Whitford (Designated Safeguarding Lead) or Mrs Purcell or Miss Hayter (Deputy Safeguarding Leads).

Our pastoral and safeguarding staff can be contacted on the below emails -

jwhitford@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org

npurcell@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org

chayter@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org

If additional assistance is required the following support is available both nationally and locally.

<https://westberks.foodbank.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/report-domestic-abuse>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

In the meantime, we would like to thank you for your continued support at this difficult time and wish everybody and their extended families good health during the time we now have away from school. We have a great team at Fir Tree – staff, parents, pupils and governors and I'm sure we will be able to demonstrate that during this period. Our thoughts are with you all.

I will of course keep you informed of any developments through texts and e-mail if there are significant announcements. The school website will also be used for any updates. We are also on school twitter so will use that form of communication too. Once again, please ensure we have your most up to date e-mail addresses and contact numbers, these can be sent to office@firtree.newburyacademytrust.org

During the school closure, I am contactable via the above email, I will also be checking e-mails regularly.

Take care, and hopefully see you in the near future.

Lindsay Wood
Associate Headteacher

Department for Education coronavirus helpline

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and children's social care. Staff, parents and young people can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)