

20th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we arrive at the end of a turbulent week, can I thank you for all the messages of support we have received from you. We are very aware of the strain that our families are feeling in trying to maintain some sense of normality in life, and we are determined to do all we can to work with you in supporting our children through this difficult time.

The government are very clear that children must stay at home if at all possible. This is both to protect them from infection, and slow the spreading of the virus to others. The advice on gov.uk says:

“Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.”

We have been making plans as messages have come through from government. To summarise some of our key actions so far:

1. An announcement has been made today about tests and exams. Full information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced>
When we know precisely what this means for Years 6 and 11 at Dartmouth Academy we will write a separate letter.
2. We have emailed all parents asking you to complete a google form letting us know if you are defined as a key worker by the government. The form is accessible here <https://forms.gle/vkoFGXfpCWFE3Q6LA>. If you have any queries in relation to this, please email us at admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk
3. We have contacted the parents of all the children who we feel might be especially vulnerable in this situation. Again, if you have not been contacted and have a concern about your child, please email us.

Please, follow these key principles:

- **If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.**
- If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.
- Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.

- **Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to the spread of the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.**
4. We are determined to do all we can to support you by keeping schools open for children who cannot be cared for at home in line with this advice. We are conscious that our ability to do this has been, and will continue to be, diminished as staff fall ill or have to self-isolate. We need not just teachers but cleaners and site staff to ensure that children remain safe.
 5. We have posted or given vouchers to all children in receipt of free school meals redeemable at local supermarkets. **If your child does attend school next week, please note that they need to bring a packed lunch whether in receipt of free school meals or not as there will be no on-site catering.**
 6. We are doing all we can to support the education of children while they are at home. We have already emailed you about this, and you can find the details on our website. If the closure continues after Easter, we will update these to ensure learning opportunities are maximised.

Your children have been a total credit to themselves and their families this week. We have already seen them respond to the current uncertainties and disappointments with resilience and good humour. We are seeing many acts of kindness as neighbours and friends look out for one another. We do not know how long this situation will last, and please be reassured that we will do all we can to keep in touch and support you so that we emerge still stronger afterwards.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Tina Graham.

Tina Graham
Principal