

18th April 2020

Dear Parent and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you, your family and friends, safe and well. It is hard to believe that we are only at the end of our *second* week of ‘home-schooling’, albeit with the Easter holidays in between. Whilst we are all facing many challenges during this lockdown period, I hope you are also managing to enjoy some quality time with your children at home. We know that many parents are supporting their children with their home learning – a challenge in itself - whilst others are doing this in addition to trying to work from home.

Keeping your children happy, active and motivated is key, at the moment. If home-learning begins to cause difficulties, take a break from it rather than ‘battle-on’. It’s better to do a little regularly, as part of a routine if you can. Don’t worry about what other people are doing – you know your child and what they can manage. Remember that any learning is better than no learning. Some days, you will find your child will do more learning than other days, as the novelty of home-learning begins to wane. Teachers are here to help at any point within the normal school day hours. I am keen to support them too, and make sure they are not working all hours of the day and evening! Please continue to be understanding if you don’t get a reply instantly – our teachers are also making the most of any ‘spare’ time to move forward with their subject leadership roles.

This is not an easy time. Perhaps most important of all is to ensure you look after your family’s emotional wellbeing. As this extraordinary, unparalleled situation has unfolded, we have endeavoured — alongside our colleagues in the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust — to help our children and their families navigate their way through these unsettling times; through the uncertainty, confusion, and stress that many will understandably be feeling.

Coming to school on a daily basis has temporarily stopped for most children, but we are striving to ensure that you continue to feel ‘connected’ with school. Activities to support ongoing learning are readily available via email contact with your class teachers and the school websites. I hope that through our actions in recent weeks we have been able to reaffirm our commitment to you and your child(ren):

* We have kept our Three Hares Primary Schools open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers in support of the country’s collective efforts to reduce the spread of the virus
* Since the temporary closures of schools was announced, we have helped our children keep focused on their learning, promoting a consistent day-to-day structure and routine, and ensuring that they have been provided with appropriate learning activities at home.
* We have ensured that our children, eligible for free school meals, have been provided with hampers of good quality, locally sourced food, with the generous support of Waitrose, Ellis’ Bakery, Farmer Luxton’s, amongst others.
* We have endeavoured to keep in touch and maintain regular contact with children and families, to let you know that we are here to support you all as best as we can, and to keep you up to date, providing clarifications, guidance and advice.

We want to make sure that we continue to support you and our children as best we can. To this end, we have created a short survey for parents and carers to complete which will be invaluable for us in monitoring the support we are giving and in helping us establish if there is anything more we can be doing to support you at this difficult time.

I would be very grateful if you could complete the survey (one for each of your children) before 23:59 Monday 20th April. Please use the link below or in the accompanying email. The survey should only take around 2-3 minutes to complete. Depending on how the next few weeks unfold, we may repeat the survey, to allow us to monitor any new issues should they arise as the situation develops further.

**Keeping in Touch Survey: Parents and Carers**

Please click here for a direct [link to the survey](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kG0HO7J4vUqeBcIPJiicRq65m3QRRsxIl7MqPXy_mOVUMkVYOEtLNEVLWkRKWTdaSUFRR0s5NU0wVS4u)

**Keeping children safe online: links to guidance from DfE**

There is lots of support available to keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers:

* [Thinkuknow](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
* [Internet matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIktuA5LWK2wIVRYXVCh2afg2aEAAYASAAEgIJ5vD_BwE) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [Parent info](https://parentinfo.org/) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [LGfL](https://www.lgfl.net/online-safety/default.aspx) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
* [Net-aware](https://www.net-aware.org.uk/) (support for parents and carers from the NSPCC)
* [Let’s Talk About It](https://www.ltai.info/staying-safe-online/) (support for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation)
* [UK Safer Internet Centre](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers) (tips, advice, guides)

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**Mental Health and Wellbeing**

As we all continue to help reduce the spread of the virus, by ensuring that we comply with the measures to stay at home and away from others i.e. social distancing, it is important that we take time to ensure that we are looking after our own mental health and that of our loved ones.

There is a range of resources and avenues for support to help parents and carers talk to their children about coronavirus. Social connections, alongside exercise, sleep, diet and routine, are important protective factors for mental health. Materials to promote and support mental wellbeing are included in the list of [online resources](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education/) the DfE have published to help children to learn at home. Public Health England’s [Rise Above](https://riseabove.org.uk/) platform supports young people.

Social isolation, reduced exercise, and bereavement, may affect children’s wellbeing in this period.

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| [Coronavirus - mindheart.kids](https://www.okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk/uploads/6/1/4/4/61443371/mhk_southtawton.pdf) | **Aimed at Early Years**​ |

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| [South Tawton Primary’s Well-Being Page](https://www.southtawton.co.uk/well-being) | **Aimed at Parents**​ |

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| [What's going on? - flipsnack](https://www.flipsnack.com/CSKidsBooks/what-s-going-on.html) | **Aimed at Early Years**​ |

* Place2Be Advice on looking after your family's mental health while staying at home

[www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-advice-for-families-staying-at-home/](http://www.place2be.org.uk/about-us/news-and-blogs/2020/march/coronavirus-advice-for-families-staying-at-home/)

* [MindEd educational resources for adults about children and young people’s mental health](https://www.minded.org.uk/), which is relevant for parents and carers as well as volunteers, teachers, and other professionals working with children
* [Guidance on looking after wellbeing and mental health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
* [Guidance on supporting children’s wellbeing and mental health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing)

All NHS mental health trusts are setting up 24/7 helplines, and seeking to use digital and virtual channels, to continue delivering support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

**Free School Meals**

We have been providing families of our children eligible for free school meals with a hamper of good quality, locally sourced food, and we intend on continuing to provide these hampers each week until further notice. Any decision taken in future weeks to move over to the Government’s voucher scheme will be shared with you at that point. If your circumstances have changed, you may now be eligible for free school meals, which will continue to be provided through the period of school closure. The eligibility criteria can be found here:  [apply for free school meals](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals)

*Please continue to be aware of scams – some unscrupulous people have been focusing on the parents of children who are eligible for Free School Meals.  Any correspondence about Free School Meals will come from Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, so please do not reply or respond to any approaches made to you asking for bank details etc.*

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Thank you again for your continued support in these extraordinary times. It has been wonderful to read and hear about the lovely feedback from many parents during this time away from school. Our Three Hares staff continue to work hard to keep in touch and ensure that children still feel connected to their schools.

Please do continue to adhere to the advice from HM Government, and regularly monitor this advice, using the links provided on the page that follows. We look forward to the day when we will be able to re-open fully, and welcome our children back.

As always, keep looking after yourselves, and each other.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs Elizabeth Underwood**

**Executive Headteacher**

**The Three Hares Primary Schools**

**Links to current advice**

(Please do check these pages regularly as they are updated constantly.)

* HM Government main coronavirus page

[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

* NHS Health information and advice

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

* Full guidance on staying at home and away from others (social distancing)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others)

* Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable people at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people)

* Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19)

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19)

* Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)

* Information for parents and carers about the closure of schools

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers)

* Free School Meals Guidance

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance)

* Guidance for schools about temporarily closing

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing)

* Maintaining Educational Provision (including ‘Critical Worker’ lists and principles).

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision)

* Guidance on vulnerable children and young people

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people)

* Guidance for educational settings on COVID-19

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19)

* Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing)