



20/03/2020

Goodbyes are necessary for us to meet again.

Well, this wasn't part of Ryefield's 60th anniversary plans.

As Headteacher I am used to having a varied week, often jam-packed with left field issues and unusual tasks. One moment I could be having a difficult conversation with a parent and pupil, the next mopping the floor due to leaky pipes; through to considering the use of wolf urine as a fox deterrent! If variety is the spice of life, then working in a school is a very flavoursome experience. But like so many things of late, recent events have been truly peculiar.

Having seen what was happening in other countries, we all knew that it was extremely likely that schools would be closed, and yet the shock of having to sit and write this letter to parents explaining things is extraordinary. The frustration with the government's lack of clarity around key issues is palpable, as I write this at 04:20 on Friday morning, we have still received no definition around who is allowed to come to school on Monday. Yet my amazing staff have rallied for your children in a fashion akin to the last national emergency for education: the evacuation of pupils

in World War 2. But despite our sterling work and unwavering commitment to keep some sense of normality in your children's lives, there remains questions.

How do we as staff explain to a community that is inextricably woven into our daily routines that we must now distance ourselves from each other? How do we adjust to not being able to shape and mould your child's learning in a face to face fashion? How can we as a school continue to be a beacon for the most vulnerable? Some of these may be answered over the coming days, others may need more time to be unpicked.

Yet today will be heart-breaking. Teachers will be saying farewell to a class who have been such an important part of every day. To have to do so at such short notice, in such strained circumstances, and with such uncertainty ahead, is devastating. In the remaining hours of Friday, we will continue to make Ryefield the loving and caring environment we have become renowned for. Our school is a safe and comforting place for your children and a place of support for our families and residents. We will laugh, smile, support and reassure the children who are with us.

Today will also see school staff working out who is eligible for key-worker status, who might need access to food banks or vouchers, and who simply cannot be left to slip under the radar. The Trust is also involved in discussions around provision going through the Easter holidays, if that is what's to be done.

In times such as these, school staff are willing and happy to play their role in the national effort of keeping society heading in the right direction.

I, and my staff, are of the opinion that providing support for key NHS staff, delivery workers, social carers is one that schools are uniquely placed to do. We shouldn't see this as merely treating teachers as childminders, but as recognition that teachers and schools are at the very hearts of their communities and among the most trusted and respected members of our society. The school is here for the



entire community and we will continue to remain open to offer advice and support for as long as is humanly possible. Yet there remains many things unknown.

Year 6 pupils leave unsure if they will ever return to Ryefield.

Friends will head off into self isolation.

Staff feel the frustration of the untapped potential they were on the verge of unlocking in their pupils.

Individuals have to reconcile that friends and pupils have already gone from their classrooms, not knowing that it may be some time before they can meet again.

The challenges of the past few days have highlighted how dedicated my school staff are. They turn up every day and serve our pupils, while also taking on roles as carers at home, whether it be for children, parents or other relatives. What perhaps makes it hardest of all is that at a time when what we must come together and unify for the collective good, our natural instincts to comfort and embrace our colleagues and pupils must be replaced with the need to socially distance ourselves from each other.

Over the past few years it seems that much of society has been fractured, with divisions and differences highlighted to spread discord and unrest. Once this is all over - and it will end - we must bring our community back together to celebrate everything that makes Ryefield a school of choice for the local community. Therefore it is important that we bear in mind, the pain we may experience from parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again, and we must remember this: when all this is over, we will come back together again just as strong a community as before, if not stronger.

KEY WORKER UPDATE

Early this morning the government finally provided the updated key worker list, which is provided on the next sheet. Please note the very clear guidance that “every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.”

Coronavirus advice clearly states that staff should be working from home where possible, and reducing social interaction as much as we can by keeping pupil and staff numbers in school to the absolute minimum, whilst maintaining safety for the children in our care. As such, we are likely to staff school on a rota basis to safeguard children who have to be in school.

The government has clarified that children, with at least one parent or carer, who are identified as critical workers can send their children to school if required, however due to low availability of places in school, if you can keep your child at home, you should do so.

With current staff numbers we are unable to provide before and after school club provision, so school will currently only be open from 8.30- 3.20. Should they struggle with a full day, pupils of a nursery age may need to continue with their existing hours, We await further guidance around the provision of food, so, in the short term, packed lunch options will be provided for all pupils who would normally receive either Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception and KS1 pupils) or have already purchased a meal option via ParentPay. Pupils who normally bring packed lunches are free to continue to do so.

We do not expect pupils to wear their school uniforms, please ensure that they wear sensible clothing and footwear: learning and associated activities will take place both inside and outside of the classroom.

Please complete the survey by 19:00, 20/03/2020

DISTANCE LEARNING UPDATE

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL PASSWORDS HAVE BEEN REISSUED FOR ONLINE PORTALS.

TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH OF EACH ONE SHOULD YOU LOSE IT.

The sites are as follows:

- EducationCity
- Times Tables Rock Stars
- Spelling Shed
- MyMaths
- Lexia Core 5 - specific pupils
- Big Cat KS1 E-Readers

Please check the ONLINE RESOURCES SECTION of the school website, we will add new content.

EducationCity home learning goes live on Monday and new content will be added weekly, a break will be given for Easter and then content will continue to follow the school's normal timetable.

Remember that all pupils have been provided with work books and there is the possibility that the school will provide more in the near future.

We will continue to provide regular updates via the usual channels:

Newsletter

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)



Coronavirus

Wash your hands with
soap and water more
often for 20 seconds



Palm to palm



The backs of hands



In between the fingers



The back of the fingers



The thumbs



The tips of the fingers

Use a tissue to turn off the tap.
Dry hands thoroughly.

