



31 March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT INFORMATION AND UPDATE FROM MARK DAVIES, CEO, TRUST IN LEARNING

Introduction

In a message to staff in all of our schools last week I made reference to the word ‘unprecedented’. As it seems that every time you switch on the TV, listen to the radio or engage on social media the term is being used to describe the situation that we are all having to deal with, individually, as a family unit, as a community, a city, a country and more widely around the world. So, unprecedented is an accurate word for describing how things are at the moment.

It is now a week since Boris Johnson implemented a nationwide ‘lock down’ which has placed significant restrictions upon our daily lives, but will of course be the key thing in bringing this situation under control sometime in the future. I think it is the uncertainty of not knowing how long things will be as they are that is difficult for all of us to cope with. Yet we must and my message to you is the same as that I sent to staff. We are all in this together and we need to support each other as we tackle this crisis – no one is immune to what we are experiencing.

As you will know teachers and other staff in education have been classified as one of the groups of key workers and this is not just those who are in schools but also those working from home preparing ‘home based’ learning materials for your children. There has been a massive amount of work put in from all four of our schools to ensure your children can access appropriate and on-going learning. I will talk a little about this later. As I’m sure you will appreciate, things are moving and changing very quickly and schools are having to respond to a rapidly changing situation. However, I will try to cover some of the key things that we are doing and which may affect you and your children.

Our Current Situation

Following the closure of normal school on Monday 23rd March Filton Avenue Primary School, Parson Street Primary School, Orchard School Bristol and Bridge Learning Campus were all kept open to provide in-school supervision and learning for children of key workers and identified vulnerable children and/or some children on Education, Care and Health Plans. Numbers in total were relatively small with more primary children accessing this service than secondary – which we and probably you would have

expected! Total numbers per day in all four schools was around 70 pupils/students. This number has remained the same. Therefore, we have around 3,000 children and young people at home accessing home based learning.

We had planned to pool our in-school support by closing two sites Parson Street Primary School and the Lockleaze Road site of Filton Avenue Primary School. This has now been done. Parson Street Primary School pupils are now supported at the Bridge Learning Campus site and Lockleaze Road pupils at the Orchard Campus site. What this does is to ensure continuity of provision as things develop because both of these sites have the capacity - site management, cleaning etc – to enable us to manage a changing and probably worsening situation. Those staff who are able to cover our in-school provision at Bridge Learning Campus and Orchard School Bristol are on a very strict rota based around health and safety protocols. Equally in school everyone is practising social distancing – pupils and staff. The health and well-being of both pupils and staff is always our highest priority.

Trust in Learning (Academies) and our schools are completely committed to doing everything we can to maintain a service for key workers as we move forward. As many of you will know Orchard School Bristol is very close to Southmead Hospital and our car parking has been offered to staff at Southmead for their use at this most difficult of times for them.

Our Plans for Easter and Beyond

Both the Orchard School Bristol and Bridge Learning Campus sites will continue to be open for key workers and vulnerable pupils over the Easter holiday period, including Good Friday and Easter Monday. **This is our intention and will only change if we are instructed to close for the two Bank Holidays by the Government.**

In our efforts to do everything we can to protect the health of children and staff we have ordered a number of handheld infra-red thermometers. These will be used by identified staff to take the temperature of children and staff as they arrive at Orchard School Bristol or Bridge Learning Campus. If the temperature of anyone is raised then they will be sent home. The kit we have purchased does not require any physical contact and we are also looking to acquire some personal protection equipment for some staff too.

As I mentioned earlier we are looking to maintain our in-school provision on both sites for as long as the crisis continues. However, teachers and other school staff are not immune to this virus and many of our staff are, as many of you will be, in vulnerable categories needing to self-isolate. This of course is another changing beast and I am very thankful to the four Headteachers, Julia Hinchliffe, Anne Rutherford, Louise Hopcroft and Rupert Maule, for the way they have been able to manage staff rotas getting staff into school and yet also protecting staff where necessary. I think it is important for parents to understand that if our staffing situation deteriorates then we would have to close one or more of the sites. I am sure that you will understand why this may be a possibility in the future. If this was to be the case then we would be liaising with the Local Authority to ensure key workers' children could access another education setting.

Home Based Learning

I really feel for parents in trying to ensure that their children engage with the home-based learning which is being provided. I know that this must be difficult, but it is important to be strong on this! This is a stressful time for everyone but please don't beat yourself up if things are not yet in some type of routine. Work with your child(ren) and come up with a joint plan of action, mixing up the day with different activities or subjects. This will be about a bit of give and take by everyone. I am an ex PE teacher so maintaining a degree of fitness is important. I'm in self-isolation but have come across Joe Wicks on YouTube and have a meeting with him for 20 minutes every day (almost!). Why not do the same? I know many of you will be doing similar things.

Everybody should be receiving work to do at home from teachers. If this is not happening then please contact the school (see below for contact numbers/emails). We are also conscious that access to on-line learning is variable across our schools and that is why we are ensuring physical learning packs are being sent out as well to many children and young people.

Free School Meal Provision

As many of you will know this has been a rather difficult thing for the education system locally and nationally to sort out. Bristol, as a City, introduced one system that was in place last week. But there were a lot of practical problems rolling this out, in addition to questions around the quality of food produced for some of our schools.

From this week a 'voucher' scheme is in place for parents whose children access Free School Meals. This is how it will work:

Sodexo Engage will be sending the e-voucher codes to your email addresses today (if you have provided the school with an email address). This voucher will cover a period of three weeks until the end of the Easter holidays.

You will need to download the voucher as follows.

Visit www.vouchershopexchange.co.uk

1. Enter the Cheque number – (this will be on the email you receive)
2. Enter Validation Code – (this will be on the email you receive)
3. You can then choose a voucher for the following retailers – Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, Morrison's, Waitrose or Marks and Spencer
4. You will need to enter an email address so that the voucher can be e-mailed to you
5. You can use the voucher in store directly from the email or you can screen shot ready for when you are the till point
6. Use the voucher as payment for goods in store

All supermarkets have exclusions including, tobacco, lottery tickets and fuel - funds being provided for essential supplies for children.

Please note that you must redeem the voucher within three months after which the voucher will expire and you won't be able use it to purchase groceries.

Where an email address has not been provided to the school, the school will redeem the vouchers on your behalf, print them off and then either distribute them by hand or send by tracked post. Please contact your school if you have any problems with accessing your vouchers.

GCSE Examinations and SATS

I know that there will be many worried families and pupils concerned about what will happen with external examinations and tests this year. You will have probably heard that the Government has said that the exams/tests will not take place and that other means will be used to provide a pupil/student with a grade or a test score.

We are expecting news and information about how these grades will be generated any day now. When this comes through then schools will inform you directly.

Contact Information

Please continue to be in contact with Pastoral Managers as needed. The main reception for Orchard School Bristol is:

Telephone: 0117 377 2000

Email: info@osb.school

I hope you have found this rather long letter useful. Thank you for your continued support in such difficult and challenging times for everyone. Please stay healthy and safe.

Yours sincerely



Mark Davies
CEO, Trust in Learning (Academies)