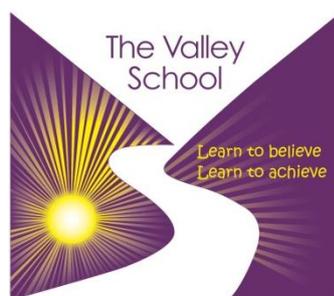


Headteacher:
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Wednesday, 01 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

LOOKING AFTER OUR PUPILS AND OUR STAFF

My apologies for sending you yet another long letter, as we head towards the end of what must be the strangest term in history. Please note that the following information relates to the beginning of the summer term and will continue until we are all able to return to a more normal way of life, which could still be many weeks ahead. I, like you, follow daily updates and I am aware that what I am writing may change between now and 20th April. However, I felt that it would put your minds at rest if you had some knowledge of my plans thus far. Please be assured that, as soon as we are permitted to do so, we will increase school attendance beyond the minimum currently being offered. We are very eager to do so.

As is the case now in many areas of our community, we are no longer able to provide anything other than what is immediately and urgently necessary, so that we limit interactions between us all and heed the Government's advice to stay at home, unless absolutely necessary.

The recommendation remains as it was, that **every child that can be kept safely at home should be allowed to do so**. We are no longer expected to provide a school place for every child with an EHCP. We are being asked to identify and prioritise only a very small number of children who cannot be kept safely at home. For the foreseeable future, we will endeavour to provide a safe place for these children.

Rules for self-isolation continue to be paramount and will override any of the other factors. Pupils and staff who have, or who share a household with someone who has, medical conditions that make them particularly vulnerable will not be allowed in school. For more help and advice about whether this applies to you, please look at the Government website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

I am being called upon to make the final judgement in each case, but your help is invaluable. The more information I have, the easier it is to ensure that I make the right decision for your family. In order to protect pupils and staff, the numbers must be kept to a minimum, so that hygiene measures and social distancing can be enforced. Any pupil who is unable or unwilling to follow expectations will not be



permitted in school. My staff are putting themselves at risk by continuing to attend school and I am committed to doing all that I can to limit their vulnerability.

Children able to stay at home – if we do not hear differently, we will assume that you are able to keep your child at home and that you will not be requesting consideration for a place.

Key Workers – if you are a key worker and there is no other responsible person in the household who can take care of your child during school hours, you are entitled to a place at school when you are required to be in work. If no other person is available, due to work commitments, this will only be considered a valid exemption if they are also classified as a key worker. We will need details of job titles, place of work and working hours for you and any other adults in your household.

Vulnerable young person – we have already identified a very small number of pupils where there is a unique set of circumstances indicating that being at home poses an additional risk to the family. We will be contacting these families directly. However, if you feel that your child is in this category, please provide details, to help me make the right decision.

Other requests – I fully understand that some of you are facing financial hardship and pressure to attend non-essential work or because you are working from home, but this will not currently entitle you to a place. The Government is taking responsibility for putting in place financial support for families where hardship may ensue due to the current crisis.

All information that you provide will be treated with discretion and sensitivity, but may be shared with the Local Authority and/or Department for Education, if they request it.

If you wish to apply for a place to be made available for your child from 20th April until further notice, you should send details to admin@thevalley.herts.sch.uk. As well as the information already identified above, please ensure that you provide exact dates when you feel this is necessary, so that we can plan ahead. I understand that you may need to update us on this factor on a weekly basis.

One of the senior leaders at The Valley School may phone you during the week beginning 13th April to clarify your response and to ensure we have enough information.

Thank you again for both your support and your concern. What we are facing is both scary and unprecedented, but we will come through this by working together, caring for each other and looking forward to positive and happy times ahead.

I remain overwhelmed and privileged to work alongside such a staff team, to work closely with your family and to be part of your child's journey, in good times and in bad.

Thank you so much for everything.

Yours sincerely,

Corina Foster

Corina Foster
Headteacher