



# MALCOLM SARGENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Love To Learn

10 April 2020

Dear Parents

## **VULNERABLE PUPILS**

As the lead school SENCO (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator) one of my jobs is to coordinate the provision for pupils with additional needs, including those children with emotional, social, environmental or developmental factors which may prevent them from achieving their personal and academic potential, without some extra support.

Whilst in school this week, I have been able to look at how the current national crisis is affecting the pupils I oversee and have been so pleased with how positively children are engaging with their learning at home. 85% of our vulnerable pupils are accessing learning from home in comparison to 96% of all pupils in school. Not everyone is finding home learning easy to get to grips with and our staff continue to offer help and support each week to those struggling to engage.

I have also been humbled by how very hard all of the staff are continuing to work to set interesting and appropriate activities, in a new way which they have had to learn very quickly. 43% of our SEND pupils are having work differentiated for them by their teachers or TAs, who in some cases are providing daily telephone or FaceTime support and encouragement. In addition to this, our Pastoral Team members continue to work hard on their outreach support of families and pupils, making daily telephone calls and in some cases carrying out doorstep safe and well checks if they have any reason for concern.

What has struck me the most, however, is that in the world in which we currently find ourselves, many of us are more vulnerable than before, in ways which we previously may not have contemplated. We regularly hear the term vulnerable used to describe older members of our community and those with underlying health issues and we are all currently more vulnerable to infection. As we are all newly surrounded by words such as 'isolation', 'quarantine' and 'lockdown', it is more important than ever to be mindful of ways in which we can protect ourselves, both physically and mentally.

## **NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing**

All people have physical and mental health and just as many of us have experienced periods of good and bad health physically, the same can apply to our wellness mentally and emotionally. This year, our school has committed to be involved in a Stamford project, in conjunction with Mindspace, to actively engage in the NHS 5 ways to wellbeing and promote positive language around mental health. Mr Cox launched this to all pupils in school assemblies, led a parent information sessions with Dr Dan Petrie, founder of Mindspace and our

staff were also trained by Carol Hines, previous Stamford headteacher, who is now a mental health trainer and advocate for Mindspace.

Mindspace is releasing weekly activities to schools which encourage children and families to engage in the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and I have attached the first of these to this letter. The Stamford Mercury is going to be promoting Mindspace each week and will include examples of pupils' work, so please do have a go at the activities attached and upload them to your Tapestry or Seesaw account for us to see!

'The Conversation Stamford', which delivers our mental health and relationships programme in school, has also contacted us with some activities for you to do including emotional collages (page 1 to 4) and ways to improve wellbeing (page 5). They are keeping their social media up to date every day with practical ideas on how to support your family at this time and can be found on Facebook and Instagram. The staff there have asked us to let you know that they would love to see any of the work you've done and share it (with your permission) so feel free to send pictures of work to their social media account or email them on [talktous@theconversationstamford.co.uk](mailto:talktous@theconversationstamford.co.uk)

### **#Connect**

Malcolm Sargent Primary School prides itself on the excellent learning opportunities we provide for our pupils and teachers are working hard to maintain these standards within our current online curriculum offer. As a result, the **#keeplearning** aspect of the 5 Ways is something that pupils can easily engage in each day. Joe Wicks, Cosmic Yoga and our very own Mr Keenan are giving us ideas to be **#active** at home, and I know most of us are making the most of our one chance to leave the house and exercise each day. I have heard about bike rides, walks in the wood and I bet some of your dogs have never been out so much! Our teachers have been asked to set activities which encourage children to **#takenotice** of the world outside their window and with the warm weather lots of us are venturing out into our gardens, encouraging children to look around at the new life of spring and Easter.

I have seen so many examples of kindness recently that I think all of us are finding new ways in which we can **#give** to others. Calling a relative in isolation, helping vulnerable friends, family and neighbours, continuing as keyworkers; these are all things which teach our children the importance of giving to others and the positive emotional benefits that come from this. Be sure to talk about this to them directly and ask them how they felt after doing or saying something kind, especially as it's easy to feel sad or frustrated right now.

However, this week in school I have asked my team to focus on ways to **#connect**. Lots of us are using technology in ways that we did not know before; 'Zoom' music lessons, playdates and parties, FaceTime calls and online learning are all very important ways of staying connected. Remember, our children are used to being with their teaching staff and class each day and for many, these relationships and connections are a part of their identity, happiness and self-worth. Therefore, we feel our role in encouraging and supporting these

connections is paramount to our pupils' emotional wellbeing. Here are some of the things we have been doing so far:

- Daily videos, including stories and assemblies from school staff
- Online learning platforms which allow the children to hear their teacher explaining the lesson
- Telephone contact from teachers, TAs and members of our Pastoral Team
- Regular communication letters to parents to keep them informed
- Doorstep safe and well checks, as needed, for families that we feel concerned about
- Requests for feedback to our 'Enquiries' account

Over the coming weeks, we will be thinking about more ways to stay **#connected** as a school community and we hope that the things we have done this week show our ongoing commitment to this:

- Children in school have made a weatherproof Easter decorations for the Easter Tree on Lonsdale Road, made by one of our families
- Miss Vickers has coordinated a fun 'Happy Easter' video for you all, which was uploaded to Facebook this morning
- Miss Vickers is also coordinating regular videos which celebrate the great work done by our pupils, chosen and sent to her by the teachers and TAs
- I will be putting together a 'Reflections on Lockdown' for families, to let you know how some of us are finding lockdown, working from home and home-learning with 'Top Tips' which have helped us
- After Easter, Mrs Mills will be working on a collaborative singing project with pupils and also exploring ways of launching online singing assemblies
- New features of Seesaw will be released to allow collaborative projects in classes and a class blog, amongst other features
- Mrs Stanier, our link Governor for SEND and vulnerable pupils is exploring how to set up a support blog for parents, which we are both happy to 'Go Live' on at a designated time to offer advice and support to parents

### **Final Update From Team Charlie**

Our school is a very different place right now. Most of the school has been cleaned and closed off and we currently spend our day within the office, the small and large halls and the adjacent Year 2 classrooms (Miss Gedney's and Mrs Nottingham's) with the Acorn Childcare Centre being run from Mrs Thomson's and Mrs Harrison's Year 1 classroom. Sodexo, which provides our school meals, are still working in the kitchen to provide hot lunches and pack-up teas for those on site and prepare packed lunches (food hampers from next week) which those children entitled to free school meals can collect.

There are not many staff or children at all in school each week. As you know, we are being advised that the safest place to be is at home. However, for those few children who need to be in school, there is a staff rota system in place which

began with Mr Revell and Team Alpha, then Mrs Perry with Team Bravo and this week, I have been in charge of Team Charlie. Joining me were Mrs Breslin as senior teacher helped by Mr Keenan and Miss Hentze; Mrs Town in the office, the MSAs Mrs Marvell and Mrs Birch who not only ran the lunchtime session, but also supported Hollie Roper in the Acorn room. Miss Miskei and Mrs Russon have not only cleaned the site and equipment throughout the day and after the children have left, but also helped in the nursery over lunchtime too!

As our week draws to a close, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my team and all of our staff, for their kindness, flexibility, dedication and hard work in difficult circumstances and to Mr Revell for his excellence in leading us all so calmly and effectively in circumstances for which he was not trained! Most of all, though, I would like to say a huge thank you and well done to you, our school community for staying at home, staying strong and working so hard to support our pupils in whatever way is working for you. Please congratulate your children on my behalf for the fantastic job they are doing and be sure to tell them that they all continue to improve my mental health by being so fabulous.

Happy Easter to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Tina Cox  
Vice Principal