



Venerable Bede Church of England Academy

Dayspring Trust



Tunstall Bank, Sunderland, SR2 0SX

Telephone: 0191 523 9745 Fax: 0191 523 9775

Email: venerable.bede@venerablebede.co.uk Website: www.venerablebede.co.uk

Headteacher: Mr D Airey (BSc Hons)

Executive Headteacher: Mrs G A Booth (BA Hons/M.Ed.)

25 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that this letter finds you and your families well, and that you are managing to cope as best you can in these challenging circumstances. It is hard to believe that we have only been closed 3 school weeks. I hope that the Easter break was restful and restorative.

As we are all aware, the closure of schools happened relatively quickly. The DFE have indicated in several publications, schools and their teachers are not expected to be able to continue to "teach" pupils as schools are currently closed (I think that we all realised that!).

Our initial aim was to get work available online for our pupils to access and complete at home. This is to support the principle of home learning. I am pleased with how pupils, families and staff have risen to this challenge - thank you for your support in this. We appreciate that it is not the same as having a taught lesson, but in the current circumstances we wanted something there for pupils as soon as possible so that they could continue their learning, and we could support parents to ensure that they did school work each day.

As it has now become evident that schools will not be returning to "normal working" in the immediate future, we are planning for what the next phase of "distance learning" will look like. Two key aspects of this next phase are pupil "feedback and support", and we are currently looking at what this will look like for our pupils. I will point out that the DFE have also indicated "There is no expectation that teachers should live stream or provide pre-recorded videos" of teaching. In part the reasons for this are that distance learning for an average class size of 25+ cannot emulate what happens in the school classroom during lessons. We cannot have the same pupil / teacher interactions in terms of instant verbal feedback and teacher guidance / direction as we would ordinarily.

Whilst there are examples of "virtual classrooms" across the globe, where teachers and pupils can interact in real time, these tend to be used where the class size is very small - not mainstream secondary schools, as interactions are not manageable in this way. Schools have been appropriately advised not to use platforms such as "Zoom". These platforms are not suitable for use by teachers working with pupils as they are not robust enough to fulfill Safeguarding requirements.

However, having said all of the above, even with all of the challenges we face, we understand the difficulties for our pupils in home learning. We want to do whatever we can to support them (and you) to continue to enable them to learn.

Our initial thoughts are that as we move forward, teachers will become more prescriptive with the work set, as well as what needs to be completed each day / week by the pupils. There will be certain "**key tasks**" set which teachers will ask pupils to complete and then hand into them via email for **marking and feedback**. This is likely to be done using the school email system as this is encrypted



end to end. Teachers may also set tasks such as asking pupils to watch lessons / specific video clips from the internet which will help them understand a particular topic. There are many of these clips available already online, the key is to be able to select the ones which are most appropriate.

Where pupils are unclear and need **additional support and guidance**, they can email their teachers with particular questions, using the school email platform, or ask for additional support material to support the topic which they are studying. Teachers will respond as quickly as they can, but it must be remembered that email is not an instant form of communication. Heads of Department will be there as back up just in case a teacher is ill themselves.

Teaching staff have been kept up to date with the latest resources to support pupil home learning (as well as having many of their own homemade ones). We would expect them to filter through the resources to choose the most appropriate for the classes which they taught, taking into consideration their age and ability. As you will also be aware, we continually update our school website with material to support learning from home – not just in the academic sense. We have also included material for Wellbeing and Mindfulness, Worship and Prayer, Learning Enrichment, and Staying safe Online. Much of this material is suitable for the whole family, and we encourage you to explore these sections. This material can quickly be accessed [BY CLICKING HERE](#).

On Friday 24 April the DFE published their plans on how they are going to support the children of some families with their home learning, who do not currently have access to the internet. The criteria for which families and children who are going to be given this support is quite prescriptive. You can access this document [BY CLICKING HERE](#).

In essence, the pupils who will qualify for the support are:

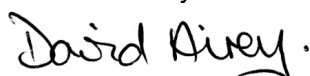
- Care leavers
- Children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker
- Disadvantaged year 10 pupils

Criteria on what qualifies as being a disadvantaged year 10 pupil has not yet clarified. We will keep you updated regarding this as soon as we receive details. What has been said is that there is an expectation that if a pupil already has a device to access the internet, they do not qualify. Devices are to be targeted to those in greatest need. Applications to the DFE for these devices are only able to be made by schools in collaboration with their responsible body (Local Education Authority or Academy Sponsor). Individual families cannot apply directly to the DFE.

In the same publication, DFE outline their plans on how they will continue to support schools by enabling them to apply for Government funding to implement and set up a “digital education platform” to enable pupils to access and complete work at home. We will evaluate the offer from the DFE and compare them with our current system.

On a personal note, I hope that all members of our community are managing as well as can be expected and are keeping safe. Worryingly, I think that the hopes we all had of this being over relatively quickly are now disappearing fast. However, we will face the educational challenges we have together, and all do our best in these challenging times.

Yours faithfully



Headteacher

