

Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

TLC

Hillcrest Primary School

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Try

Hillcrest Downham Market

Norfolk

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2nd April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE 2: A Strange End to Term

Today is officially the end of the Spring Term here at Hillcrest and what a strange end of term it has been.

For many of the children it will have felt like the term ended a fortnight ago although hopefully, the Google Classrooms have kept the children busy this week and engaged with their teacher.

Google Classrooms has been a learning curve for staff, pupils and parents. Undoubtedly there will have been technical and logistical challenges to overcome before even sitting down to try and complete the tasks that the teachers have been setting. Hopefully it hasn't been too painful however and, for every query raised by a parent who has been having technical issues, there have been twice as many positive comments from children and parents who have welcomed the opportunity to experience this form of online learning and grateful for the efforts their teachers are going to in order to keep in touch.

Over the Easter holidays we will be sending out a request for parents to order a further paper-based pack of resources from school, and details of how and when this will be distributed. It won't be compulsory to take a copy of this additional pack of resources, but we are also aware that some families may like the extra material to compliment what is provided over the internet.

I still hold out some hope that we may see the children again for a few weeks before the end of the Summer Term. However, clearly we are also planning for a re-start to schooling that doesn't take place until September, should that be the case.

For those of you who know parents who will have children joining Hillcrest for the first time in September 2020, please let them know that we plan on getting in touch with all new families after Easter to welcome them to the school and to share the vital information that

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they will need in order to prepare themselves and their children for life at Hillcrest. However, we are in the hands of the virus when it comes to the number of opportunities that we have, if any, to invite new parents and the children into school before September.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the processes and activities that have been put in place by the school since this health crisis has started to dominate our lives...

- Google Classrooms – a mechanism for online learning and materials for the children to access were being prepared for several weeks prior to the eventual school closure when it started to become clear that there would be a massive impact on schooling. This allowed us to have a head start and enable online learning to get off the ground as soon as was feasibly possible;
- Paper-based resources – in order to bridge the gap between the school closure and the launch of Google Classrooms, paper-based resources were provided to all children so that their learning could continue at home uninterrupted. These paper-based resources also enabled those families with limited or no access to the internet to provide their children with activities from Day One of the closure;
- Facebook Storytelling – Mrs White established a new Facebook page called ‘Hillcrest Primary School Story-telling’ and became the first member of staff to read a story to the children over Facebook this week. At 10am each day, children will find a different teacher from the school telling their favourite children’s story;
- Emergency Childcare Provision – from Day One of the closure Hillcrest provided childcare for those families where both parents/responsible adults were on the government’s Key Worker list. A total of 55 children were eligible with the reality being that, as this crisis started to escalate, far smaller numbers of children actually attended. This Emergency Childcare Provision will continue throughout the traditional Easter break for those same children;
- Free School Meals – from Day One of the closure, the families of those children in receipt of Free School Meals (NOT Universal Infant Free School Meals) have been able to collect a packed lunch prepared by the school kitchen staff. After Easter, there will no longer be packed lunches prepared on-site at the school. Instead, we will begin issuing supermarket vouchers to the families of Free School Meals pupils now that the government have confirmed what the arrangements are for providing those.
- Applying for Free School Meals - As finances start to become more of a struggle for many with the uncertainty over jobs, we are encouraging those parents, particularly with children in Years R, 1 & 2 who would normally receive Universal Infant Free

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School Meals, to apply for Free School Meals on the Norfolk County Council website at the following link www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo - if your financial situation means you are eligible, then we could be issuing you with the weekly £15 supermarket vouchers throughout the duration of the school closure, once we have been told of your eligibility

Learning is Everywhere

Fortunately, we are living in an age where technology is helping families separated by the virus, to stay in contact with one another.

This same technology has meant that there are also a huge range of options for the children to keep up-to-date with their education and their physical fitness.

I want to take this opportunity to look at just some of those options that are out there...

- At 9am every weekday morning, Joe Wicks streams a live exercise workout for the children via You Tube. I am aware that many of our parents, and staff, are talking part in these sessions with the adults often more worn out then the children;
- A teacher from another UK school, Holly King-Mand, has become an internet hit with her online English lessons. So, if its more English that you are after for your children and they have completed everything that their class teacher has provided then why not go to Facebook and look up 'English with Holly' which I believe streams live at 11am every day – this is primarily aimed at the older pupils in the school;
- Comedian and author, David Walliams reads one of his whacky, but entertaining, children's stories every day on www.worldofdavidwalliams.com. If you miss out on hearing his audio book on any particular day, a week's worth of recordings are stored on the website at any one time;
- We may be limited with where we can go at the moment, but there are still opportunities to have fun and be learning at the same time around your home and garden. This entertaining website provides some creative ideas <https://beventuresometrips.co.uk/adventureathome/>
- The Friends of Hillcrest posted a message on Facebook regarding a phenomenon that has taken the country by storm. On my way to work I am confronted by a wall of rainbows in people's windows which have been designed by the children. They always cheer up my day as they do the many other people who walk or drive past

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them. In an attempt to spread some joy at this difficult time, children are asked to post images in their windows of different things each week. Although 'rainbows' were the first image, over the next few weeks the pictures requested are...

- w/c 30th March – sunshine
- w/c 6th April – Easter
- w/c 13th April – animals
- w/c 20th April – flowers
- w/c 27th April – smiley faces
- Another phenomenon which began in New Zealand and which is spreading worldwide is the mass teddy bear hunt. Just as with the pictures that children are being asked to draw above, children in New Zealand began sitting their favourite teddy bear in their living room window so that families out on their daily, allowable, walk for exercise could spot the many different bears.

Keeping the children safe

At a time when we are so dependent upon the Internet to keep some form of normality in our lives and to help educate our children, we also need to be mindful of the risks that it poses to children who have unfiltered access to it.

The following two web links offer parents advice and guidance about what to look out for and how to help keep their children safe online...

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media>

How you can help yourselves and others

The local Foodbank that many Hillcrest parents so generously support every December, are ready and willing to support those families who now need them at the challenging time. If you feel that your family are in need of support through the Foodbank or you know of a family that you feel would benefit, please send their details to the school office via office@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk and we can arrange for a volunteer from the Foodbank to get

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in touch. If you are sending someone else's details, talk to them about it and please ask for their permission first.

The Downham Covid-19 Mutual Support Group is also available for those more vulnerable members of the community who do not have any local friends or family around to fetch their shopping at a time when they not be in apposition to go out themselves. Find out more and how to access their support on Facebook where they appear under 'Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group for Downham Market and Surrounding Villages'

I will provide further updated throughout this closure period as and when there is more information to share. Please look after yourselves and each other.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Try