

# Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

# TLC

Hillcrest Primary School

**Headteacher:** Mr Matthew Try

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20<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

## SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE 3: Welcome to the Summer Term

Today sees the official start to the Summer Term, albeit in very unusual circumstances. Therefore, the children will hopefully be reengaging with their class teachers today through Google Classrooms with the staff on hand 'virtually' throughout this half term.

It is looking increasingly likely that schools will be asked to reopen before the end of the Summer Term, possibly after May half-term, although this is yet to be confirmed and dependent upon the success of the containment measures and progress of the virus.

I would like to reassure the children that, in the event schools are asked to open before the end of term, all statutory testing has already been cancelled for this year. This includes the SATs tests in Years 2 and 6 along with the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check and, what was to have been the first in a new set of statutory tests, the Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check.

I would also like to make parents aware that, in the event that we are asked to reopen in this academic year, school will not look the same. With social distancing measures likely to still be required whilst the virus is still active, schools are not going to be able to operate in the usual way and it is highly unlikely to be a return to full-time education for all of the pupils.

However, these are plans still being worked on and very much dependent on advice and guidance from the Department for Education and Norfolk County Council.

### Paper-Based Resources

We look forward to seeing several parents at school on Tuesday as they come to collect the second set of paper based resources that we have printed off for the children.

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Around 120 of our 509 children will receive these resources after their parents got in touch with the school. They were largely produced to offer those families with a patchy Broadband service or who struggle for access to a computer with some support in another way. Some parents whose children have been completing everything provided by their class teacher on Google Classroom have also applied for a pack.

The packs will be distributed via the fire exit to the main school hall so that we keep visitors inside the building to a minimum at this time. Those collecting will be asked to place a tick beside their child's name after taking a pack so that we know who has and hasn't collected.

We will provide pens to do this along with an alcohol gel dispenser. However, should you wish to bring your own pen then please do. We would also ask that parents do not come on to site if they are displaying the main Covid-19 symptoms of continuous cough and fever and that if there is a queue for the packs that the, now familiar, social distancing rules are observed.

Parents of children in Reception and Year 1 should come along between 10.00 and 10.30. Those in Years 2 and 3 between 10.30 and 11.15 whilst those with children in Years 4, 5 & 6 should drop by between 11.15 and 12.00.

## Free School Meals

For the first two weeks of the school closure, the Hillcrest kitchen staff continued to provide children in receipt of Free School Meals with a packed lunch.

I should stress at this point that this service was only available to those families who applied directly to Norfolk County Council to receive Free School Meals and it was NOT available to all of the children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 despite the fact that children in these age groups receive Universal Infant Free School Meals, which is a different arrangement.

At the start of the Easter holidays the government announced that a national Free School Meals voucher system was being launched through an organisation called Edenred and that parents in receipt of Free School Meals should have received these vouchers over the holiday period. The vouchers are to the value of £15 per week, similar to the value of a school meal, and are able to be used in the major supermarkets.

The new system proved to not be capable of meeting the huge demand that they should have foreseen. For instance, Hillcrest placed its order for the vouchers on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April,

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as soon as it was announced that vouchers were to be provided throughout the Easter holidays. Although the order was approved the same day, it then took until Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April for the system to generate the e-voucher codes that we needed to pass on to parents. In between placing the order and receiving the vouchers, you may have seen on the national news that the Edenred system required a massive upgrade over the Easter weekend to be able to fulfil the 17 million requests that it had received at that point.

We are pleased to say that the first set of vouchers finally went out to parents last week and hopefully, now that the system has started to work as it should, that it will be far more straightforward in future weeks. Apologies to those families who have been affected over the past couple of weeks.

## Applying for Free School Meals

Families are able to claim Free School Meals when they meet a set of criteria based upon their financial position. Being in receipt of a government benefit is often an essential part of meeting the criteria that triggers receipt of Free School Meals.

Parents who feel that their circumstances may have changed for the worse since the coronavirus outbreak and who may now be in receipt of benefits, may find that they now qualify for their children to receive Free School Meals. However, it is not the individual school that makes that assessment. Parents have to apply to Norfolk County Council via the website [www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo) and then follow the link to the Free School Meals application.

Once your application is successful, Norfolk County Council will inform the school and as soon as we know, we can start arranging for the Free School Meal vouchers to be distributed to you.

The Universal Infant Free School Meals that are normally available to all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have confused the situation as the government's FSM voucher scheme is not open to all of those families. However, there may be several families within those year groups who would qualify for traditional Free School Meals and who would benefit at this difficult time from going to the [www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/neo) website and applying.

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## Learning is Everywhere

As well as the learning that our staff are continuing to provide the children with, there are a wealth of online learning opportunities for the children if they wish to take up the opportunity of accessing them.

Reading is the single most important thing that children can do at any time and if you are running short of reading material at home, there is an online resource that you can turn to.

The Oxford University Press are providing free access to a library of children's eBooks through their Oxford Owl website. Its full address is [www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page)

I am sure that many of you are managing to maintain some form of exercise, even if it's just a kickabout in the back garden. Daily exercise is vitally important for the children even though you have to be a little more creative in these times to find opportunities for it to happen.

Whilst lots of families are joining in daily with the Joe Wicks exercise classes on You Tube, if his workout is a little too challenging for the younger children (or less flexible adults!!) then there is another option. The CBeebies website offers the chance to 'Workout with Andy' at the following website [www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/fun-exercises-to-do-at-home-with-kids](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/fun-exercises-to-do-at-home-with-kids)

The BBC are leading the way with what it claims is its biggest push in the field of educational programming. From today, there will be 6 x 20 minute programmes called Bitesize Daily available on the BBC iPlayer and the BBC Red Button service targeting all age groups. These will largely cover English, Maths and Science initially.

For those adults who remember BBC schools programming at its finest and for those children who want to continue to enjoy some of the programmes we shared with them at our 1980s celebration in January, then You Tube is where you can go. Search 'Look and Read' on You Tube and most of the educational series from the 1980s are available to watch and still just as valid an educational tool now as they were then. In fact, the Year 3 and 4 pupils thoroughly enjoyed watching the first episode of Look and Read: The Dark Towers.

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At the weekend the government announced the launch of the Oak National Academy ([www.thenational.academy](http://www.thenational.academy)) which is accessible from today for the first time. Daily online lessons will be available in a range of curriculum subjects.

## Breakfast and After-School Provision

It is with regret that we have to confirm the closure of the breakfast and after-school provision that has been in place at Hillcrest since September.

Gingerbread will no longer be operating as a childcare provider following issues with both maintaining staffing levels on top of the added complications that the coronavirus brought.

Hillcrest are interested in approaches from other childcare operators and would happily consider working with another organisation to enable this vital provision to continue.

However, in the absence of another childcare provider being willing and able to take the breakfast and after-school club on, it is entirely possible that once schools reopen after this enforced closure period, that there will be no such provision in place.

Those parents who had been making use of the service have already been notified directly by Gingerbread of their decision to close.

We apologise to those parents affected for any difficulties that this may cause. However, without the support of an outside agency, breakfast and after-school care is not something that we are able to provide.

## And finally...

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our pupils and their families well at the difficult time. We will continue to update you with news and advice as soon as it reaches us and we have new news to share. Stay safe and we hope to see all of the children again soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Try