

Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

TLC

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Try

Hillcrest Primary School

Hillcrest

Downham Market

Norfolk

PE38 9ND

Telephone: 01366 388191

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1st May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE UPDATE 4: The End of the Fourth School Week

We hope that all of the Hillcrest children and their families are well.

We are told that we are currently passing through the peak of the virus but without seeing significant drops in the numbers of new infections, it is difficult to see when school can return to normal.

Even if schools are asked to return before the Summer holidays, they will look far from normal and, as the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said this week, there will be a phased return. We are waiting to hear what form that phased return might take.

Although tough and challenging, the role that parents and carers are playing as home schoolers is vital to ensure that, upon their eventual return to school, playing catch up to where the children should be and with where their peers are, is as painless as possible.

On average, children fall half a term behind with their skills, knowledge and understanding after a six-week Summer holiday and do not catch up with where they were in July until around October half-term. Multiply that effect out against the current closure period and you can get a sense of the challenge that lies ahead for the teachers and the pupils.

However, children are also resilient and used to making up lost ground after school holidays and periods of ill health, and therefore, despite the period of time that they will have been away from school, they will catch up, they will move on and school life will return to normal eventually.

We would however, urge parents to ensure that if their child has been relaxed about completing the Google Classrooms work or they have yet to complete many tasks in the paper-based resource packs, that they start to engage more and complete tasks daily. The more they keep up with their learning at home, the easier it will be to slot back in to normal daily school life when they return.

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The importance of reading should also not be underestimated and we have always said that if schools only had to do one thing every day to improve children's life chances as they get older, it would be to allow them to read as much as they can. The same now applies to home. The more reading opportunities you give your children, the better.

Residential Trips

It will come as no surprise that whether we are back at school after half-term or not, the annual Year 6 residential trip to Hilltop will not be going ahead.

All parents who had paid for their children to attend that trip will receive a full refund in due course.

However, in addition to that, we will not be booking a residential trip for our current Year 5 pupils next year. The uncertainty around the length of time that social distancing measures will need to be in place as the search for a vaccine goes on, combined with the complications around the insurance issues that we have had over the past few weeks as decisions about who is liable for the repayments to parents has taken place, means that it would be reckless to book another trip at this time, even though it is over a year away.

However, even if a residential trip for next year's Year 6s isn't a possibility, we will still look to provide them with a week of activities, which will hopefully be able to include day trips by then, so that there is a positive end to the year in prospect.

Year 6 Leavers

The current school closure has hit many families hard with children, parents and teachers all getting to grips with online teaching and Google Classrooms in particular.

However, please spare a thought for the Year 6s who have possibly been hit hardest by the current situation.

Although they haven't had to go through their SATs exams, which for some would have still been preferable to the current lockdown and an opportunity to show-off their knowledge, skills and understanding, by now they would have been preparing for the Hilltop residential trip and engaging in transition work with their future High School.

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Although school returning in June isn't a prospect that everyone would relish, for the Year 6 pupils, it would provide an ideal opportunity to engage in some of those activities that would prepare them for life at Downham Market Academy, Icen Academy, or wherever else our pupils may be moving on to. Hopefully the High Schools are keeping in touch directly with the parents of Year 6 pupils about their plans in the event that we either do or don't return to school before the Summer.

The Summer Term usually provides a pleasant opportunity for the children and the staff to celebrate the successes of the children before they move on with the culmination being their Leavers Assembly in front of their parents.

We have a range of options planned for the Year 6s which again depend entirely on whether we see them again before the Summer holidays or not. If school does not reopen we will ensure that the children still get their Leavers Yearbook, gifts (of some description) and there will be the usual array of awards. Even if school does return after half-term, it will not be possible to hold a traditional Leavers Assembly due to the restrictions around social distancing. However, we are looking at the options around holding an outdoor ceremony where we may be able to social distance everyone or, indeed, a virtual ceremony that is streamed to the homes of the Year 6 parents.

Strange times require unusual solutions.

Paper-Based Resources

Despite the success of Google Classrooms, the paper-based resources have also proven popular and we plan to distribute one final round of these after the forthcoming VE Day Bank Holiday.

Therefore, if you would like your child to receive these in addition to the work they are doing online, please email office@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk by 1pm on Wednesday 6th May so that we can start printing them off.

You have three options...

- 1) If you have a printer at home and are happy printing these yourself, we can email the file(s) to you;

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- 2) If you would like them to be posted out to you because you do not live close to the school or you are self-isolating because you are displaying symptoms, please let us know;
- 3) You can collect the paper-based resources from the fire exit to the main school hall on Tuesday 12th May

I would like to reassure parents that the staggered collection times that we had for the packs on the last occasion worked really well and prevented large queues of people forming.

When emailing us, please make sure you tell us the names of your children and the year groups they are in. This helps to speed up the process for the people receiving the emails and creating the log.

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 on Tuesday 12th May 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.

Just One Number and Parent Line

Norfolk's Children and Young People's Health Services offer the **Just One Number** service.

If you require any support with advice about your child, would like to contact a health professional or require assistance with changing medical appointments then you should call **0300 300 0123**.

Just One Number is open between 8am and 6pm from Monday to Friday and between 9am and 1pm on a Saturday.

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Parent Line is a text-messaging service for the parents/carers of any child aged between 0 and 19. For advice about your child's health or wellbeing, simply send a text message to **07520 631590** and a member of their team will get back in touch with you.

Parent Line is staffed between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and between 9am and 1pm on a Saturday.

They are keen to stress that at this difficult time, their service isn't solely about medical issues. They are also there to support parents with mental health and emotional issues.

'Norfolk School Games' Goes Virtual

Norfolk School Games set weekly challenges.

The **Norfolk School Games** have gone virtual for this term whilst we are not in school. Each Monday they will be releasing a new PE challenge for pupils/parents to take part in, via their social media platforms.

The challenges have been designed so all pupils/parents completing them can achieve and then improve their own personal best, rather than be in competition with anyone else. Once completed the challenges pupils/parents can submit their videos via any of their social media platforms. Make sure to tag Norfolk School Games in your post, the school's name and your year group.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible taking part!

Excitingly the first **challenge** is related to **mini tennis**. For more details click and watch this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZTMdnppKmw&feature=emb_logo

Next week's challenges are Kwik Cricket and Angling.

Please find their various social media platforms below...

For Instagram use @norfolkschoolgames

For Twitter use @westnorfolkssp and @norfolkschgames

For Tiktok use @norfolkschoolgames

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For Facebook entries please post directly onto the Norfolk School Games Facebook Page.

For Email - schoolgames@activenorfolk.org.

Developing Hillcrest's Outdoor Learning Facilities During the Lockdown

Hillcrest has been delighted to have benefitted from some kind donations from local businesses to support with our outdoor learning facilities around the school.

Baytree of Hilgay recently donated a range of gardening materials for those children still in school to get digging!

Baytree of Hilgay put out an online appeal for people to nominate local schools who could make use of gardening supplies. Hillcrest was one of the lucky schools to benefit from the donation.

Staff quickly got to work planning ways that the children could benefit. One of the activities was run by Mrs Farr, who took the children to our forest area to make flower beds using some of our Eco Bricks collected last term. Today, the children have created a Living Teepee made out of bamboo cane and which will see runner bean plants weaving their way around it over the coming months.

It is so lovely to see the children making fantastic use of the gardening materials in a sustainable, eco-friendly way.

Our thanks go to Baytree of Hilgay and to everyone who nominated the school.

B&Q have also donated some daffodil and tulip bulbs which have now taken pride of place in the planters close to the Hillcrest Hut in the Key Stage 1 playground. We look forward to seeing them brighten the school up as we move through the spring.

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Talking about Coronavirus

The spread of Covid-19 is an incredibly difficult issue for adults to get to grips with. It can be hard when listening to lots of different perspectives on its origins and its likely effects on our lives to make enough sense of what you are hearing to even begin explaining it to your children.

Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson and Nia Roberts have produced a book that is available online called Coronavirus: A Book for Children.

This is available for all to read with their children at the website below...

<https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-A-Book-for-Children.pdf>

Some Lovely News

We thought that parents would like to hear the good news regarding Miss Hancox who was due to start her Maternity Leave on the day that the schools officially closed for the lockdown.

Miss Hancox has given birth to a baby girl, Mollie, who weighed in at 8lb 6oz.

All at Hillcrest have sent their congratulations and wish Miss Hancox, Mollie and her close family well.

Emergency Childcare Provision Full Closure Message

To those using the Emergency Childcare Provision at Hillcrest, please note that the school will be completely closed on Friday 8th May for the VE Day Bank Holiday.

And finally...

A final message to remind everyone that this virus will pass, life will return to normal, school will reopen, the children will get to spend time with their friends and this illness will no

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longer be the first thing on our minds. What no one can answer at the moment is the length of time that will pass before we get to that stage, but get to that stage we will.

We hope you are all keeping well and continue to look out for one another. We look forward to seeing you all soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Try