

Learning delivered with

Text Linked Curriculum



Hillcrest Primary School

TLC

Hillcrest Primary School

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Try

Hillcrest Downham Market

Norfolk

PE38 9ND

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5th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

SCHOOL CLOSURE 2021 UPDATE 1

School Closure

After much confusion over the Christmas holidays, culminating in a particularly frustrating last weekend for everyone involved in schools from both a teacher's and parent's perspective, the decision was finally taken to close schools until 'at least' February half-term.

By Saturday we had finalised the additional arrangements that we were to make in order that we could reopen as safely as possible on the Monday. We were even following the government's party line of attendance which was that every child should attend school unless ill or isolating, which I appreciate didn't sit well with every parent for reasons we completely understand.

Sunday then began with the Prime Minister insisting that schools were safe on the Andrew Marr Show. However, by the afternoon other events unfolded. Mr Try had attended a Norfolk Headteacher's Meeting and members of the largest teaching union, the NEU held a meeting; both events having a massive impact on decisions that were then taken from that point.

The NEU and Unison, who advise our support staff, were both recommending that their members send Section 44 letters in to their respective Headteachers, stating that they did not feel safe attending the school setting whilst the virus was having such a significant impact across the country and whilst the government refused to publish the full SAGE data relating to how transmissible the new Covid variant was amongst children.

Despite much distress over the decision, a number of Hillcrest staff members sent Section 44 letters in even though they expressed upset at feeling they had to take this action. However, not opening on Monday was absolutely the right decision in the end. The government's announcement on Monday evening proved that the NEU, Unison and the National Association of Headteachers, who had supported the NEU's stance, were ahead of the game and following the science with the government desperately playing catch-up.

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Facebook Comments

This is an emotional time for lots of people and we fully understand that a closure on the magnitude of the one that the country is experiencing at the moment is going to be tough on a lot of families.

I would also like to express the fact that the staff miss the children and would much rather be supporting them in class than supporting them from afar over a computer screen. As mentioned above, the decisions that had been taken at the weekend, both to initially open the school and then to close it, were not decisions either easily or lightly taken. The last thing that we want to do is to further confuse and frustrate parents at a time when there is already enough to be frustrated about.

However, we do not also wish to see personal comments and jibes about the staff on Facebook.

The parent who stated that the staff were 'on strike' on Monday and that they couldn't be bothered to come to work, should be ashamed and embarrassed about making such comments. Such ill-informed, inconsiderate ramblings should not be allowed over social media and the comments could not be further from the truth.

The staff would like to thank those members of the Hillcrest community who rightly shot that parent down over those ridiculous comments.

Emergency Childcare Provision for Key Workers and Vulnerable Children

The list of Key Workers and Vulnerable Children is now complete and we have a register of those who, when the childcare is necessary, will be attending the Emergency Childcare Provision at Hillcrest throughout the lockdown.

We would like to stress that those who are on the list because their parents are Key Workers should only be using the service if there is no responsible adult at home to care for the children. Even though each person on the list has a space, if all chose to attend on the same day, we may not be able to accommodate all and have to start prioritising places.

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Therefore, we would ask that by 10am every Friday, the parents who are aware they have Key Worker status, email office@hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk confirming on which days the following week they will require this service. Can parents please make contact by 10am on Friday 8th January for the week beginning Monday 11th January.

The reason for the lockdown is obviously to keep as few people in circulation as possible in order to minimise transmission of the virus and therefore, we would also like to keep the numbers of children at school to a minimum during this period.

Remote Learning

The children can now access their virtual learning timetable via their Google Classroom or the school website. Their teachers will be available to interact with them throughout the period of closure and between the hours of 8.55am and 3.30pm.

It is the expectation that the children participate in this online learning and class teachers have been asked to keep a register of the interactions they have with the members of their class.

If a teacher does not hear from a child for a period of time or get any work handed in, they have been asked to call the parent.

ALL ADULTS TO WEAR FACE MASKS ON THE SCHOOL SITE WHILST DROPPING CHILDREN OFF AND COLLECTING THEM FROM 4TH JANUARY

This will also apply to those parents dropping their children off for the Emergency Childcare Provision throughout the lockdown.

School Dinners

The school kitchen remains open for the time being which means that 'cold' school dinner options will be available. Dinners for those on the Key Worker list can be ordered in the same way, via WisePay and children who receive Free School Meals will continue to receive these if at school.

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Those who would normally receive Free School Meals but who are not in school at the moment, can still order a packed lunch that can be collected from the Main Hall of the school at 11.45am each day.

However, going forwards, this system may change back to the supermarket vouchers that were provided during the first lockdown although this hasn't been confirmed yet.

DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO THE KEY WORKER PROVISION IF...

- ...they display a temperature of 37.6 degrees or higher;
- ...they have a persistent cough (regardless of whether you believe this to be caused by something else);
- ---they complain of a sudden and extreme loss of taste or smell.

In the event that they are displaying these symptoms, you MUST get your child tested as they will NOT be accepted back into school until a NEGATIVE Covid-19 test has been received and their symptoms have subsided.

If your child develops any of these symptoms whilst at school, we will isolate them and then ask you to come and collect them.

How Do I Get A Test?

You can register for a Covid-19 test at the website below...

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

Or alternatively, you can call 119.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Try