

NEWSLETTER – Covid - 19

A word from the Chairman



I hope that you are all surviving the current crisis, one which is unprecedented in my educational experience.

The closure of schools has not been easy and the survey we sent to colleagues was to gain some indication as to how this had been approached. The results are seen below alongside comments and longer personal accounts.

The next page is an example of how one school said goodbye to their pupils.

We were approached by a colleague from the TES who was interested in how small schools were continuing to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for their pupils.

With this in mind we would be pleased to receive any details you have on this subject both in the initial stages and how you will develop these areas should the closures continue into the long term.

Two other aspects of this situation have also come to the fore.

- FSM provision: what difficulties have you found in accessing the DfE recommended site and how have you overcome them?

- Community involvement:

The NASS Charter speaks of the small school being the 'heartbeat of their community' - has this situation demonstrated this more fully for you and if so can you provide examples?

Alongside this we are always interested in ANY aspect of life in the small school which has been highlighted, reinforced, delighted and surprised you in the Covid-19 emergency.

Please feel free to send anything which you feel would be of interest to colleagues and provide some ideas, guidance or just bring a smile in these troubling days.

Good luck take care and stay safe!



Snape Primary School

Sarah Gallagher, Headteacher

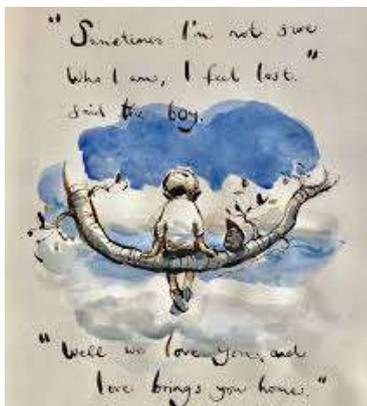
Dear Snape Superstars,
this is just little letter for you to keep reading and reminding yourself that you are ALWAYS part of a fantastic village school family, near or far. We know you are probably feeling a little bit confused and a little worried - it all feels a bit strange for us all doesn't it? It's normal to feel a bit worried when there's changes and unusual things happening.

Try to remember that we all think you are quite simply fabulous children. We are super proud of all of you and all the things you bring to us every day that make us smile and always cheer us up. Whether you are in school or out it is your curiosity and enthusiasm that will keep you being a good learner. You know you learn all the time anywhere and EVERYWHERE don't you? We are learning too-it's a fantastic thing that us humans can do if we really put our mind to it.

So what we would like you to do is have some fun when you are learning even though it might look a little different. We want you to keep on being THINKERS, CREATORS, INVENTORS, ARTISTS, IMAGINEERS, MATHEMATICIANS, SINGERS, MUSICIANS, ENGINEERS, CRAFTSPEOPLE, HISTORIANS, GEOGRAPHERS, SCIENTISTS, COOKS, COLLECTORS, GARDENERS, WRITERS, READERS and all round GOOD EGGS (IT IS NEARLY EASTER!)

We hope you might be able, even though you will need to be with a grown up, to get lots of fresh air and notice all the changes spring is bringing us. You might be able to collect items, draw and record and even take some pictures and share them with us. If your grown ups have a twitter account they can help share some of your 'finds', send us pics via office@snapeprimary.co.uk as well as showing us all on DB Primary. We are looking forward to finding out how you follow some of your own learning paths. Maybe we can, when we are all back together, see how we can carry on following the learning paths that you choose to and see where it leads?

We want you to have a rest at Easter - don't eat too many eggs! - and then we will launch some of our bigger projects with you. We will talk to you online and might even catch up with some of your families on the phone. You never know we might surprise you and talk to YOU on the phone too :)



We are really going to miss you and we will feel a bit sad tomorrow when we shut school for most of you. BUT the sun will keep shining and we will look at all the signs of spring/summer and before you know it we will be together again and we will sing+laugh+celebrate+catch up with all your news.

Sending you lots of smiles and sunshine,

Love from the whole of TEAM SNAPE

P.S you all have plenty of time to improve your joke-telling (especially Eagles!) so make sure you can tell us some good ones when we see you again. P.P.S we WILL have Sports Day and Leavers and some kind of Fun Afternoon. It just might not be on the usual dates - where there's a will there's a WAY.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"



"Kind" said the boy

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Question 1- **are you open?**

24 colleagues responded:
Of those -

10 were open

4 others were available should they be required

The rest were closed but staff were still available should they be required

Question 2- **are you linking with other schools to provide for children of key workers?**

A nursery school which was not open had arranged for one child to join their sibling at an adjoining primary school.

A three first school federation decided to accommodate all their pupils in one school

One school spoke of an informal link.

Interestingly two schools had been instructed not to link with other school to eliminate possible safeguarding risks.

'children are safer staying as we are – the fewer people we are in contact with the better'

Question 3 – **are your staff coming into school or working in other schools?**

Here responses ranged from situations where all the staff were in school to more commonly where a rota system was in operation.

These usually operated over a three/four-week period with one week in school – depending of course on the number of staff available.

Staff from one school which was not open had volunteered to work at one of its neighbours

Where a school was not open then staff made themselves available for parents should they be required by phone or email.

At all times the health and safety of pupils and staff was paramount.

Question 4 – **how many children are involved?**

As could be expected under such unusual circumstances, there were no set numbers of pupils guaranteed on any specific day, so numbers tended to vary depending on the context of the school.

The highest number recorded was 11 but on average 5 pupils seemed to be within school.

The questionnaire did not request any information about the work which was being undertaken by pupils – these issues will be dealt with in a later newsletter.

Question 5 – what arrangements are you able to make for school meals e.g. are you using vouchers?

The original questionnaire was delivered to schools BEFORE the government arrangements were finalised.

Provision for school meals largely depended on the individual school context and a full range of provision was seen.

- Packed lunches provided by the school
- Supermarket vouchers
- Vouchers schemes set up by the Local Authority
- E vouchers
- Supermarket gift cards
- Food parcels/hampers
- Food provided by the regular caterers
- Meals provided by the local pub
- Food provided by the local shop

Question 6 – have you been able to support your local community?

Schools which remained open maintained a link with their local community either via social media – Twitter, Facebook or via email or telephone.

School websites, and parentmail also provided information

Links to the local church were also utilised

One school arranged to send cards and pictures to those in isolation and there were several instances where local shops and businesses were supported through the school remaining open

Materials – paper/pens etc. were also distributed for pupils

Remaining open was a key message for two schools

One other school had helped to support a neighbouring community by staff working in their school

Even where a school was closed there was the understanding that staff were available should they be required

‘Posters and banners for NHS to see on their way to work and home again’

‘By being open has meant the local village shop and the farm has continued to be open’

‘Our school has been approached to help hold food bank items in the hall and be a place for volunteers to sort things. We have agreed to this if needed as the hall is big enough for social distancing etc’

Question 7 – **how supportive have your local community been?**

Comments here ranged from ‘very supportive’ to others where there had been little or no contact

‘The church is being supportive with food donations’

Question 8 – **do you have any photographs to share?**

A selection of photographs were sent and these will feature in a later newsletter

Whilst above, we have given an early indication of the way colleagues have been responding to the Covid-19 and by nature of the questionnaire sought only basic details. Alongside this there have also been other comments which were outside the scope of the information requested.

Two schools have given permission for their comments to be reproduced at the end of this newsletter and they give an indication of what is being replicated in many small schools everywhere.

We have also been able to draw further information from the responses and the comments below highlight other areas where action was taken.

From the outset:

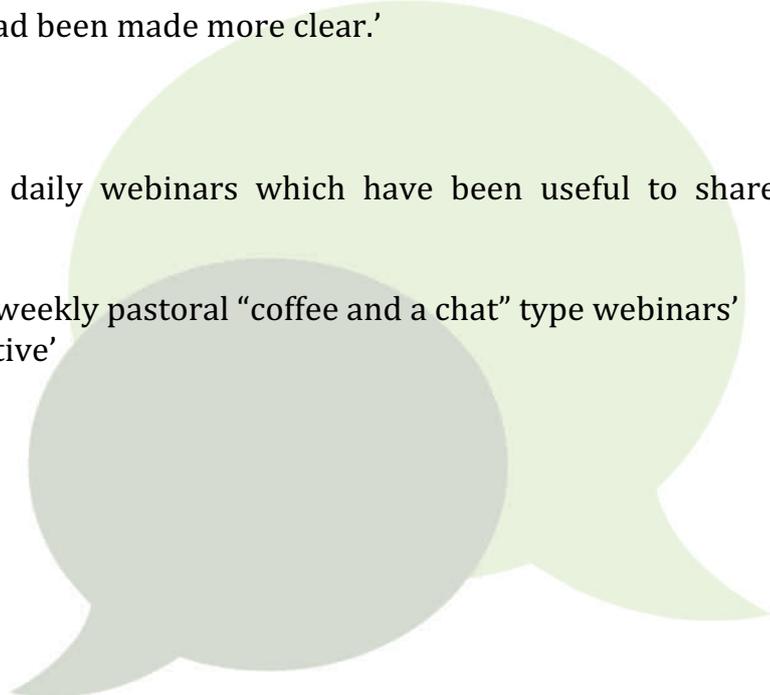
‘It has been a challenging few weeks, not helped by the short time to turn everything around and lack of information at helpful times of the working day.’

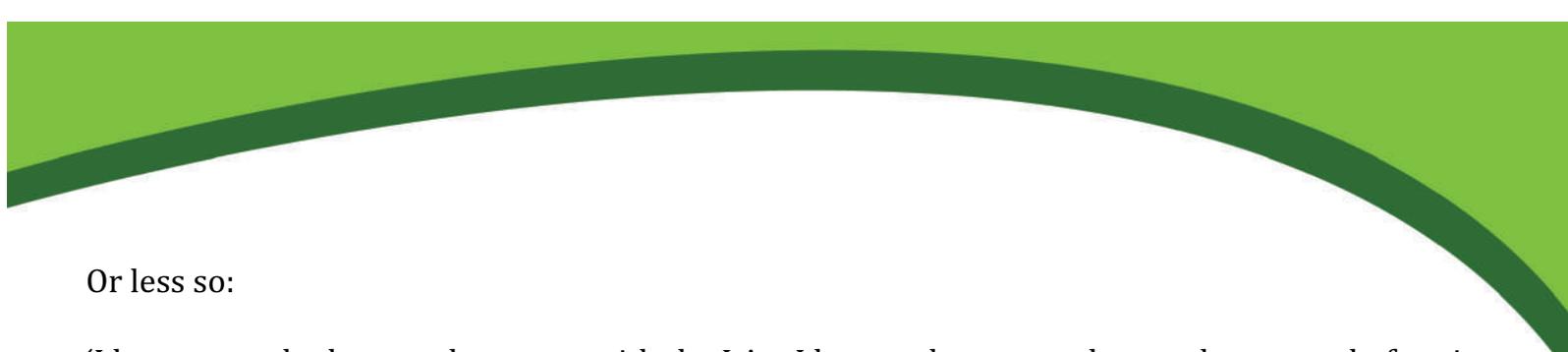
‘It would have been better if the government had stipulated that both parents needed to be key workers, would have made some of the conversations I have had easier. It would have been useful if exactly who the key workers are had been made more clear.’

To the external support being offered:

‘The NAHT rep for our area has set up daily webinars which have been useful to share information and ask questions.’

‘The LA heads association has set up twice weekly pastoral “coffee and a chat” type webinars’
‘The local authority have been very supportive’





Or less so:

'I have never had so much contact with the LA – I have only ever spoken to them once before in 5 years – now it has been more than 5 times in one week!!'

Alongside that within school:

'Staff have been great'

'Those who are not able to be on the rota have worked behind the scenes following up pastoral issues and sharing information'

'...others have kept us going with food, silly pictures on the group chat and messages of support.'

And how pupils are working:

'Working out of one classroom, each child has their own table, resources etc. and using the hall each child has their own PE mat to enable effective social distancing to take place.'

With some messages for the future:

'I am delivering the message to parents that the most important thing when we are through the other side of this situation is for all our children, families and staff to return happy, healthy and safe.'

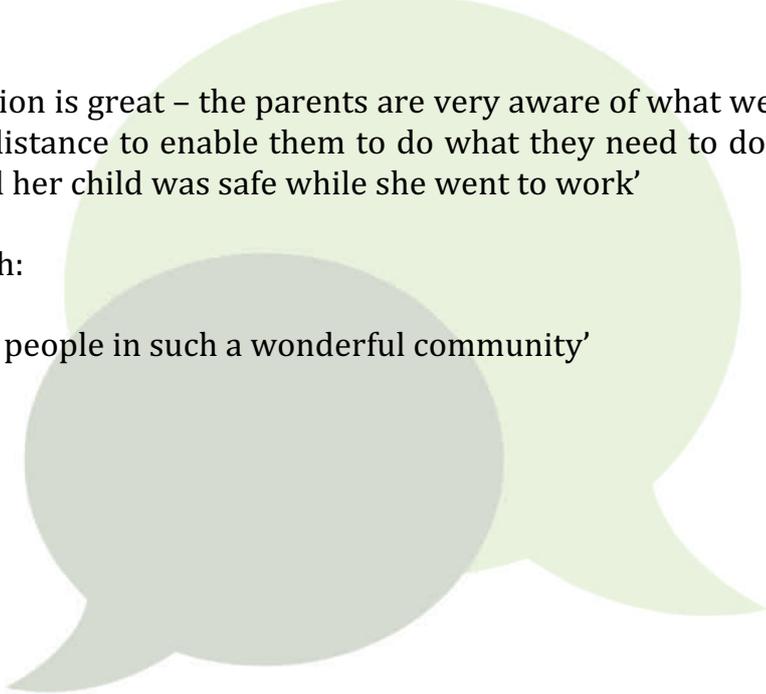
And stressing the value of the small school:

'I think the benefits of the small school are felt in this situation. Online learning and responding to blog posts and e mails if manageable, checking in with vulnerable families goes with our ethos and personal touch and again is manageable with the amount of children we have. I have created logs so staff can ensure all children are engaging and feel again that these are fair requirements with the amount of children we have'

'I think being in a small school in this situation is great – the parents are very aware of what we are doing, that we drive from quite some distance to enable them to do what they need to do. One mum cried because she was so relieved her child was safe while she went to work'

And one other comment which says so much:

'I feel very blessed to work with such great people in such a wonderful community'



We have also received this reply from Lisa Richmond, Headteacher at Elston All Saints Anglican/Methodist Primary School in Nottinghamshire which we felt was worth including in full.



We have 114 children in 4 classes, this includes some Early Years children. We have mixed classes with the exception of EYFS, they are a class on their own.

When it became apparent that the Coronavirus was going to be a big problem I had already started to think of home learning packs just in case we had to close at short notice - good job I did really!

We had already spoken together as a staff team as to how best we could provide for the children if we needed to close - we talked about google classroom but, as we had not used that before we decided against it - we didn't want to go down the line of online teaching for a number of reasons.

- would all staff stay well enough to be able to do this?
- would all families be able to access it?
- would it put extra pressure on parents and teachers?
- would the technology always work?

The village our school is in has notoriously intermittent access to Wi-Fi etc!

We already used Seesaw and Tapestry in school and all children and parents were familiar with it so we knew we could utilise it. It enables teachers to post videos, messages, activities etc and also allows children to respond using the same.

We decided that each day the teachers would send a little message with some learning activities for the day - these would be include English and Maths activities as well as Learning Journey activities. We would also set challenges to keep them active such as fitness challenges in their garden, bouncing on their trampolines etc. We decided to do this daily so that we had daily contact with them rather than leaving it a whole week between messages.

We sent information to parents, letting them know that this is what we would do and also told them that a pack would be sent home, which would include all of the login details for all of the platforms the children may want to use; Purple Mash, Times table rock stars etc. three exercise

books, a maths one, a writing one and one for keeping a daily journal. We also included pens, pencils, rulers etc.

For our Reception children, the class teacher included number lines, numbers and letters to trace, a pot of dough for dough disco (!) so they had all of the resources they might need.

We had all of this ready before the announcement was made to close schools – that worked well for us because we were able to make sure all parents had logged into their seesaw account, that they still remembered their login details etc. and could send new ones to them before we closed for the majority of children.

Our website has a resources area for children and parents to use and this includes all of the free resources that companies have given everybody access to along with links to audio books etc.

After the first week of closure I rang every family to see how they were and how they were coping with the learning and the situation. I also send weekly emails reminding them that the most important thing is theirs and their child's mental wellbeing. If they don't manage to complete all home learning then that is ok – if the children read, practise their tables and write their journals quite frankly I will be happy. I would much rather we had happy children return to us rather than children with anxiety issues. I do think that this may be inevitable to a degree but I wanted parents to know that spending time in their gardens, playing board games and just being together as a family is actually the most important thing. We can address the learning once we are back.



I am in regular contact with staff and three staff members are on a rota, along with me, to be in school when we need to be. If we are needed, I am always in along with one other member of staff – so far this is working but we have made arrangements for the children to be in a different school if we all fall ill. Hopefully this won't happen and we can continue to support our families in our own school – I have resisted being part of a 'hub' because I felt we were safer in our own school.

We organised vouchers for FSM before the government announced their provision – it worked well and families were pleased. We have been unable to get on the govt. site and know that it has been quite the failure by all accounts. We will continue to use the system we had in place because it worked and if we have to take the financial hit them so be it. We are fortunate in that we only have 2 families who need it and for those schools with so many more it must be awful for them and their parents.

NASS is "The Voice of Small Schools", we have been supporting Small Schools for over 40 years.

If you are not a member, please join us.

Our details can be found at www.smallschools.org.uk