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Dear Parents and Carers

Apologies for the delay in contacting you, it has been hard keeping up with the fast moving changes. I have been involved in serial meetings with the Local Authority about keeping special schools going and responding to the needs of the community and the advice from Government

Firstly, may I thank you for all the support we have received. The staff have done an incredible job in preparing children and learning, and families have done an incredible job in making decisions which protect children but also support them in managing unprecedented change, in no time at all.

As you are aware, the situation now has moved from last week's position into that of prioritising preservation of life over everything else. The key position is that if a child can safely remain at home then they should do that, so schools' offers are much reduced.

Critical workers

In circumstances where **both** parents or carers are critical workers, the school will offer a normal school day in order to enable workers to go to work and keep the country running. Many thanks to those critical workers, as we are all so reliant on you now.

Please note that the Critical Worker definition differs slightly from the old Key Worker term, under the recent move to keep all children at home wherever possible.

Vulnerable children

In collaboration with Surrey, schools and Social Care (and other professionals where involved) are carrying out a risk assessment for every child/ young person with an EHCP. Nearly all of our pupils are safe to remain at home, but there a few individuals who will be better off at school. In those cases families will be contacted by school and social workers to agree on the best offer for them. The offer for all children and young people attending school will be more about care than education, but we will structure their programme so that they are accessing the same learning as others in their classes where practical.

Learning at home

The Government's priority currently is safety and preservation of life rather than education, but at Gosden we won't waste opportunities to encourage our pupils to be learning. Teachers will continue to run online school during term time. This offer has started and we are building and developing as we go. Some hiccups as online services have become overwhelmed, but I'm sure we can all cope with that.

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Keeping in touch

You will all be in touch with your teachers, and we have info@gosden-house.surrey.sch.uk for any queries which are not class related. Our Home/ School Link Worker Annie has set up a Parent Help email and phone number, so if you need home/ school support, please contact her through one of those channels. parenthelp@gosden-house.surrey.sch.uk

Teachers have been asked to call and speak to every child every week. This is to keep children in “classes” and connected, and so we know they and you are OK. Please do answer when the teacher calls on a Thursday.

Food vouchers

You will be aware that the Government has agreed to provide support for free school meals, and Surrey have prioritised this workstream, so we expect to hear very soon how it will work. At the moment we recognise that income streams have been hit by yesterday’s announcement, so if you find yourself in financial hardship please contact Annie and ask for food support.

Easter holidays

Teachers will take a break from running online school during this time, but a holiday programme will be offered to identified children. You will be informed about that.

Stay at home to save lives

Thank goodness the weather has given us a break anyway. Surrey will be publishing advice and FAQs for parents and carers, and I will send you a link. For now, please keep the self-isolating going and make sure you get plenty of Vitamin D (sunshine!).

Yours sincerely

Cindy O’Sullivan
Head Teacher