



## LANCHESTER E.P. (Cont.) PRIMARY SCHOOL



Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I really hope you and your families are all keeping well. As parents working from home, going out to work, parenting children, coping with the demands that lockdown has put on us all – you do need to take some time out for yourselves. I am sure you will be constantly putting your children first – don't forget that you need a little down time for yourselves too and please be kind to yourselves! I think everyone has found this to be a really challenging week in so many different ways. The change in the weather hasn't helped along with the realisation that home-learning is here to stay for a little while at least.

I have said it before and I will say it every week though – please do not expect too much of either yourselves or your children. These really are extraordinary times and we are all finding our way through the maze of what is expected of us and how to cope with it all. I will repeat this as many times as needed – every weekly letter if I need to!

*If your child does not complete their work – it does not mean they will fall behind.*

*If your child displays challenging behaviour – it simply means they are struggling to cope and this is their only way of expressing it.*

*If your child becomes clingy – don't worry – this is a phase of uncertainty and insecurity – but it will pass.*

I have had numerous conversations with parents and carers this week who are all starting to really feel the strain of home-schooling or in some cases, their child is feeling the strain. If this is the case, I urge you to have a break. It does not matter how much work your child has or has not done. When they come back to school, the teacher will take over at their level and just continue and re-visit whatever they need. Do not worry about them.

When I walk around our school at the moment, it just hits me that it is just a building - an empty shell with no life or spirit. But a school is not just a building. A great school is alive and vibrant. There is an energy, togetherness, a common focus, a love and a community spirit. Children are the life and soul of a school and without them it is soulless.

Like you, I long for the day when I am able to stand on that yard and welcome the children back. I have no further updates on when schools will re-open but I can assure you that we will continue to be here virtually for the whole school community as well as welcoming the children of key workers who are critical to our country and community.

### **Home Learning**

All class teachers continue to work very hard to ensure the children have a steady amount of work to be completed throughout the week. In Early Years, this continues to be updated daily. For Years 1 – 6, this will continue to be uploaded twice a week to eSchools.

I realise that eSchools has been rather slow recently on a Monday morning – I have been in touch with the company and they are trying to get this sorted for us as quickly as possible. However, as Mondays seem to be the worst time – we will make the work available from 9pm on a Sunday evening in case any parents choose to download the work earlier. It will also be available on a Tuesday evening by 9pm at the latest ready for the remainder of the week.

Alternatively, I would perhaps recommend you considering a change to your Monday routine. To avoid frustration at a computer on a Monday morning, why not let your child do some physical exercise, read a book, access some of the other websites such as Purple Mash, Timestable Rockstars, Busy Things etc and then access eSchools on a Monday afternoon? Just suggestions to ease the stress levels at home!

Thank you very much for your feedback this week in response to the email you received from your child's class teachers this week – we are currently looking at all your comments and will certainly consider all of your suggestions.

### **PGL Residential for Years 5 & 6**

The final deposit for this was due by today. However, due to the uncertainty around this visit, the school will pay the balance so that we are in line with their terms and conditions as it is unrealistic to expect parents to pay out more money at the moment when we still do not know if the visit will go ahead. We will, of course, keep you up to date as soon as we have any news one way or the other.

### **Learning By Questions**

These lessons continue to be exceptionally well-attended with over 100 children accessing them this week. The lessons will be continuing at 9.30 every Tuesday and Thursday morning. For the last 2 weeks, these have been Maths lessons, but next week the focus is changing to English. Get ready to sign in again next week!

### **Staff Well-Being**

It is my responsibility to ensure the well-being of all the staff and it has become increasingly apparent to me that the staff are working harder than ever and under a great pressure. I am sure that those who have suddenly found themselves working from home will also totally understand this. Many have young families, elderly relatives and we are all trying to multi-task each and every day which is a huge challenge. Some have also had close family bereavements which obviously is impacting on their ability to work normally. With this in mind, I have directed the staff to use a Wednesday afternoon to just clear their heads, research activities for the following weeks and spend some time away from their laptops! I need the staff to be fit and healthy so they can continue to support your children!

This means that after 12 o'clock on a Wednesday, they will not be available to answer any emails or queries from parents and they will not be corresponding with children on eSchools during this time or on Evidence Me in the case of Early Years. However, feel free to contact me if you need an immediate response during this time.

I am sure you will understand that this is important to maintain a good healthy mind in some very challenging circumstances. I think all of the staff have been absolutely terrific in their approach to working virtually and we could not ask for anymore from them.

### **VE Day - Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Next Friday is a Bank Holiday as it is VE Day. As a result, there will be no work set for the children for this one day. There will be work and activities on the class pages that the children can get involved with during the week and on the day itself. It will certainly be a very strange Bank Holiday!

### **Lanchester Partnership and Churches Together COVID-19 Support**

This group has been set up by local people to help support the families in Lanchester in these very challenging times. The group pick up shopping and prescriptions for anyone self-isolating, they can just give you a friendly phone call if you are feeling lonely or they can get urgent shopping supplies to you in times of need. They are also able to provide food hampers and children's activity packs for needy families.

Everyone is facing very uncertain times and in many cases, salaries have become uncertain and working hours reduced. Even if a parent is furloughed, the loss of 20% of a salary can make a huge difference to the income of a family. The organisation is very aware that there may be some families in need due to a sudden change in employment situation. They are hoping that they will be needed only as a stopgap whilst families are getting sorted with benefits or other support.

However, if you are in need and would appreciate some support from this organisation and have a delivery of a food hamper and/or children's activity pack, please email me: [j.davis@lanchesterep.net](mailto:j.davis@lanchesterep.net) and I will be able to make a referral on your behalf. This referral can be anonymous – no names need to be mentioned on the referral.

Please be reassured that this will all be dealt with in the strictest of confidence. I am personally making the referrals for families to try to ensure that there is nobody who is too proud to just admit that they are struggling at this particular moment in time and do need a little help. It could be any one of us who find ourselves in this situation.

The deliveries are all collected by the drivers – they are not told who has paid or not paid for their delivery – so it really is highly confidential. You have my utmost guarantee that not a single person within our school community will be informed if you do request a referral.

Equally, if you need shopping as you are self-isolating, then the group can also help. Just give them a ring and they will be able to help. Their number is: 07925 130310.

### **Free School Meals Vouchers**

Families receiving these vouchers might be interested to know that Aldi and McColl's have now been added to the list of supermarkets which are accepting these vouchers. Please email the school office if you experience any difficulties downloading the codes. There still appears to be a delay in the system unfortunately as you should have received 3 weeks 'worth of vouchers last Monday – hopefully they won't take too long to appear.

### **Northern Echo Report**

I have been informed that there will be a full page report on our school in Monday's Northern Echo with photographs and a report on the work we have been doing with both the key worker children and home-learning. I am sure many of you will want to see this. There is also a link to the online article: <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/18414728.key-workers-children-forming-close-bonds/>

### **Early Years News**

Thank you all of you who continue to engage with the activities that we send through Evidence Me. As always, please let us know if you have any issues with adding photos or videos to the system and we will do our best to support you.

Reception children now have access to the Rising Stars reading scheme online. This needs you to sign up as a parent via the following link: [bit.ly/epreadingbooks](http://bit.ly/epreadingbooks)

You will need your email and your child's name. We will approve your request to join within 48 hours and will assign books for you to share. We hope this helps to keep your children reading!

We are excited to share a new initiative from our friends at Tales Toolkit. They have created a place for you to go to for ideas and resources to support your children. If you have not signed up yet, please go to <http://parents.talestoolkit.com> - you will need to use our school code LANCHDH70HU to sign up and then you will also be able to join the Family Tales Toolkit Facebook group to share ideas. We really do think that this is a fantastic resource which has supported our children's language and literacy skills.

Finally, let me leave you with these well-stated words:

***'Respond to your children with love in  
their worst moments  
their broken moments  
their angry moments  
their selfish moments  
their lonely moments  
their frustrated moments  
their inconvenient moments  
because it is in their most  
unlovable human moments  
that they most need to feel loved.'***

Look after yourselves, keep safe and keep smiling. Be strong now, because things will get better. It might be stormy now, but it can't rain forever.

With very best wishes to you and all your families,

*Jane Davis*

Mrs Jane Davis  
Head Teacher