

Acle Academy
South Walsham Road
Acle
Norwich NR13 3ER
T: 01493 750431
F: 01493 751279
E: info@acle.norfolk.sch.uk
W: www.acle.norfolk.sch.uk
Principal: Mrs Helen Watts



20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today we will be closing our doors to a significant majority of our students. Although we will be closing our doors, we will not be closing our support, our care or our commitment to your children's education. Although we may not be able to see your children every day, we are still here for them and still here for you as parents.

The last few days have been extremely distressing for everyone. We have been trying to react to an ever changing and dynamic situation; often finding out information at the same time as you. We do not have the answers to so many questions, but we are all firm in our belief that we will do the best we can for our students and your families. We have been so proud of all students over the last week; they have shown maturity, kindness and compassion in this difficult situation.

We have been relentlessly working to ensure that we can provide the best home learning experience for your children. We have set up Google Classrooms and we will be issuing work via Class Charts. We will aim wherever possible, to make this manageable for students to work independently. We appreciate that many parents have younger siblings and family members to care for as well as full time jobs. We will not expect parents to teach children.

For those students who do not have internet or computer access, we have produced packs of work and textbooks for students to take home. We have encouraged all children to bring their exercise books home. We have allowed all children to take extra books from the library and we have produced packs of stationery and equipment for any child that needs them. We have also issued sanitary products to girls who may need them. For the foreseeable future we will remain open for key workers and vulnerable children. If your child did not access resources, books or equipment, we can arrange collection next week.

We will be offering a free school meal to all children who are eligible. Our kitchen staff will be supplying packed lunches that will be available for collection from reception on Monday from 11:30 each day.

School open for Key workers and vulnerable children

The school will be open from Monday for children of key workers, children with EHCPs and children who are most vulnerable. Further details will follow from the Wensum Trust today in a separate communication.

Full details regarding eligibility criteria can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

The Government message states that:

*The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. **If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.***

*Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And **every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.***

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- 1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.*
- 2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.*
- 3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.*
- 4. **Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.***

*If workers think they fall within the critical categories above they should **confirm with their employer** that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their **specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.***

To help us plan for provision today, if you believe your child is eligible and you are unable to keep your child safe at home, **please contact the school as soon as possible** to confirm whether your child will be attending school on Monday. Ring 01493 750431 or info@acle.norfolk.sch.uk. Please state clearly the name of your child or children, your occupation and whether you intend to take up the offer full time or part time. If you intend to take up the offer part time, please specify which days.

It is essential that we have this information today so we can plan for Monday. Priority will be given where both parents are key workers.

Specific advice for parents regarding all aspects of school closures can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Remote Learning

The next few weeks are going to be daunting and distressing for all of us. I understand that many families will be facing difficult economic circumstances and uncertainty over the future. I also

appreciate that our fear for loved ones will be at the forefront of our minds. As a school, we are still here to support. We have drawn up strategies to support the families that need us most and we will be in weekly contact with you. We will be offering a support line for any children or families that need us. Please email engage@acle.norfolk.sch.uk and one of our trained designated safeguarding leads will be in touch with you. Nelson's Journey- a support service for children, is also offering additional support to help children deal with anxiety or fears concerning the current pandemic- please email <http://www.nelsonsjourney.org.uk/coronavirus-anxiety/> for further support.

Over the next few weeks and months, children will naturally be spending more time online. Although the internet is a great source of learning, it also has its dangers. We have updated the safeguarding section of our website. You will find detailed support and advice to deal with cyberbullying, gaming, sexting and grooming. I would advise parents to try to limit the amount of time that your child is online. There are a number of apps available that help parents monitor their child's online action.

The next few weeks will bring uncertainty for all family members and setting strong routines will help children adjust to this new experience. You may find it useful to follow a timetable, using your child's current timetable will help with this as we will set them learning tasks in accordance with their usual timetable. Do encourage students to take regular breaks from learning and regular physical activity. The BBC has set up free online resources to help with remote learning and there are lots of YouTube channels dedicated to keeping children fit and healthy. We will share regular hints and tips via Facebook to help. Many parents may also see this as a great example to teach life skills such as how to use a washing machine, gardening, cooking and DIY - a varied diet will help keep children entertained.

Social distancing

One of the most difficult challenges you will face as parents is ensuring your child adheres to social distancing. From talking to our students this week, we know that many are under the illusion that it will be a nice long holiday to hang out with friends. I urge all parents to adhere to the government advice regarding social distancing and **not allow children to meet up**. Although children do not seem to be as affected by COVID 19, we have a responsibility as adults to ensure they do not pass the contagion on to the most vulnerable members of our community.

Year 11

Our collective hearts were broken this week with the announcement regarding school closures and the termination of exams. Although some students' initial reaction may have seen them jumping for joy, we know that this decision is leaving students feeling vulnerable, anxious and aggrieved. We have reassured all Year 11 students that we will do everything in our power to ensure they get the results they deserve. We do not know how GCSEs will be awarded yet but we understand that a decision on this is imminent. Rest assured that if staff are called upon to make a contribution to the assessment procedures, we will use our professional integrity to make a judgement based upon students' capability, aptitude and work throughout the years. In anticipation of this, we have already briefed staff in detail to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the current situation in any way. As the assessment methods remain uncertain at this time, we encourage all students to carry on working and revising. Ofqual are currently looking at a range of options so it is important that Year 11 students continue to prepare.

We understand that many students will be worried about their next steps and college places. Mrs Pentney is working hard to liaise with colleges and sixth form providers. We have already heard that many students have received emails from colleges assuring them of their places. Students should check their emails regularly for updates. Mrs Pentney will be in contact with students applying for apprenticeships and students who are still unsure about their next steps. If you have any concerns, please email Mrs Pentney directly at npentney@acle.norfolk.sch.uk.

The likelihood of Year 11 returning to school still looks uncertain at present. We are deeply saddened by the measures that we had to impose yesterday, no one within the school community would wish for Year 11 to leave school without a celebration. There were lots of tears, all round yesterday, but we were proud of the mature way that students handled this difficult news. I would like to personally assure all parents and students that we will ensure that Year 11 students have the celebration they deserve. We will honour the leavers' assembly, shirt signing, photos and the prom when normality resumes.

Parents of Year 6

At present, we do not know how long we will be operating under the current measures. We will try our best to give all Year 6 parents the information they need to ease transition arrangements. We understand that this will also be a very daunting time for current Year 6 children. With the likely removal of the SATS, we will work closely with feeder schools to ensure we have all the information we need to smooth the transition experience for those joining us in September.

Thank you

Like many others in the public sector, we have faced the most challenging week of our careers. We have had to adapt to the ever-changing advice and information with a rapid response, whilst teaching and safeguarding the children in our care. This has been a particularly complex challenge in light of the regulations around self-isolation, meaning that many staff have had to act and contribute remotely.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognise the valiant efforts of all of our team. I know that many of our staff have hardly slept this week; they have been worrying about preparing for this eventuality, whilst also teaching, safeguarding, preparing strategies and resources and covering absent colleagues and also trying to protect their own families. I have been in awe of the team spirit and the dedication shown by our staff to rise to the challenge, reassure children and keep a safe and purposeful learning environment. I am immensely proud of the diligence, dedication and public spirit of our staff.

Thank you very much for all the emails of support we have received, it has greatly helped us in this uncertain time. Thank you for your patience and understanding you have shown towards our staff.

It is with a very heavy heart that we will also be saying goodbye to Mr Day, who was successfully appointed to Assistant Principal at Taverham High School and has served Acle Academy for twelve years. As you all know, Mr Day is an inspirational teacher and leader and much beloved by the whole school community. Mr Day has been instrumental in the success of our school at all levels - he

was a guiding light through the transition of the school and he has been a wonderful colleague and friend to the whole school community. We shall sadly miss him, but wish him every success with his new challenges ahead.

Finally

The forthcoming weeks are going to be challenging for us all. As we look to the rest of Europe we can anticipate the next steps for our country and community. Please keep yourselves and your family safe by:

- Washing your hands frequently throughout the day
- **Ensuring that you self-isolate you entire household if anyone has a persistent cough or temperature above 37.8 for 14 days**
- Do not travel unless absolutely necessary
- Ensure you and your family keep a **social distance**- especially from vulnerable members of the community
- Shop responsibly
- Watch or listen to the news every day for further updates

Please regularly check the government advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Self-isolation NHS advice

- Try and keep two metres (three steps) away from other people - especially older people or those with long-term health conditions
- Make sure any room you are in is well ventilated.
- Ask friends and family and delivery services to deliver food and medicine - but avoid contact with them
- Sleep alone if possible
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds on a regular basis
- Don't have visitors and ask people to leave deliveries outside
- Don't leave the house, even just for a walk
- Use separate facilities where possible. If sharing, these should be cleaned before use by others
- Use separate household items like towels, bedding, toothbrushes, cups and dishes
- Try to keep away from your pets. If you can't avoid it, wash your hands before and after contact
- You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

Please remember, if you need anything at all, do not hesitate to contact us. Although our doors are closed to some, our hearts are open to all.

We look to seeing you all again in the future, when the world returns to normality.

Until that point, best wishes for you and your family from all at Acle Academy.



Mrs H Watts