



Dear parents and carers

30<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## Staying connected

We have had lots of positive feedback from the distance learning and support last week. Many of you are now familiar with Zoom and are hopefully using it (or other apps like it) with other friends and family members to keep connected. As time goes on, we hope to creatively develop our use of this facility to support other aspects of life and learning at home, so that you are as fully supported as possible. So that you are aware, we are also keeping in touch as a staff in much the same way to ensure we keep our community strong and positive throughout this challenging time. Last week there was a staff 'virtual tea break' where staff from across the academy stopped to have a Zoom check in with each other. The positivity of team support and collaboration could not be stronger.

## Essential childcare provision

Monkmoor site reopened last Tuesday to provide essential childcare to the children of key worker families who were unable to stay home. In order to provide a safe environment for these children, to fully support and protect the NHS, we have a risk assessment in place that helps us to follow the guidance for social distancing in a stringent way. This is not taken lightly. In line with our school values, we would naturally want to bring everyone who needed this care into the building together, however under the current situation, that action would be reckless and counterproductive. We fully understand the pressures some families face when school is closed, and this unprecedented situation is magnifying those challenges, as the usual freedoms and support that are usually available, are not.

## Ability to follow social distancing

Frustrations regarding our risk assessment process are understandable, however we ask parents/carers to recognise that we are unable to follow social distancing guidance with children and young people who require any form of physical contact, which will ultimately put their child, their family, and those of the other children, and staff, at further risk. As set out by government, all children with a learning disability are at increased risk due to their neurological difficulties. This is why we took the decision to close on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March.

## Increased risk – mixing different households

In this environment, all children (who are already at increased risk) and staff, come from different households, mix in the school building, and then return home. We follow the guidelines rigidly to reduce the risks of cross-contamination and spread of this life-threatening virus as best that we can manage and control. We appreciate that this may cause difficulties with some employers, particularly if they are key workers, however all employers are expected to take socially responsible decisions; particularly where there are childcare responsibilities to a parent that others are unable to keep safe. We would identify this as a form of '**Shielding**' of your child, who is in the 'increased risk' group.

## Easter provision

School is officially closed to pupils and staff over the Easter holidays to make way for essential health and safety maintenance and testing of the buildings and site. It is also time that staff use to re-charge and rest to avoid burn out. However, **if childcare is essential to you, and there is no other way that your child can remain at home, please email your Department Lead/ class teacher to let us know by 10:00am Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April.** Please note that this request will be

Monkmoor Campus  
Woodcote Way  
Monkmoor  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 5SH  
Tel: 01743 563333  
**Principal: Sabrina Hobbs**

**Severndale**  
Specialist Academy



Everyone valued. Everyone included. Everyone learning.

subject to the same stringent risk assessment, and limited to staff availability and essential scheduled building health and safety checks. We will do what we can to support and protect the NHS and key workers to sustainably carry on working.

In circumstances where childcare provision is not offered, we work with other health and social care colleagues to find other options for support, if this is what is vitally needed.

### **Easter holiday distance support – Zoom/phone call contact**

Please also let us know if you feel that there is a strong need to maintain some contact via Zoom or phone call over the Easter holidays. **If this is the case, please email this request for distance support to your Department Lead/ class teacher by 10:00am Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April.** We will endeavour to offer support where possible, although this will be subject to staff availability and likely follow a very different and much reduced schedule.

### **Preparing for the Easter holiday**

This week, teachers will focus their support and teaching to help prepare pupils for an Easter break; what this might look and feel like. Please feel free to support these conversations to help identify and personalise learning/discussions and develop ideas for holiday activities. Typically, at this time in the year, pupils are just as exhausted as the staff and they need time to rest and recuperate. This year, the need for this will not have changed, although how this will manifest will be very different! We may not be able to control what happens next, however we can try to prepare for it.

Thank you for your continued support during this time of uncertainty. We have appreciated all your feedback and supportive words. It is this, which encourages us to continually develop, create, and innovate our practice and provision to ensure your children are happy and continue to thrive.

On behalf of all the Trustees and staff at Severndale, we hope you have a safe and enjoyable Easter break.

Best wishes,

**Sabrina Hobbs**  
**Principal**