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Dear Parents and Carers,

At the end of the first fortnight since our school closure, I wanted to write to you all and say a huge thank you for the amazing job you are doing both in keeping your children safely at home, where possible, and supporting them in their learning.

We have been overwhelmed by the school work children are doing and the incredible range of incidental learning they are experiencing through gardening, cooking, playing board games, drama and physical activity. You are doing a great job. Many of you have shared your stories of home schooling with us, both challenges and successes. It is clear that you have taken on this tremendous responsibility and I wanted to say that whatever you manage to do will help your children when the time comes to return to school. Thank you.

I know this is a difficult time for everyone. Do remember that many of our children will be as anxious as we are. However, hard you try to shield younger children from the news, children will pick up on feelings of tension and stress and like us, have never experienced anything like this before. We all know that children joke about being off school for weeks on end but the reality is that they will miss their friends and miss the routine and predictability that school provides.

Don't worry if over the coming weeks you see this anxiety emerging in a range of behaviours from your children. This may present as tearfulness, anger or even outright tantrums as children struggle to understand. It is all perfectly normal. As you will all know, what children need is comfort and reassurance. As well as a little bit of learning, spend time with your children playing in the garden, going for walks and painting pictures. Avoid scary programmes, too much time on video games which build up tension and aggression and repetitive news broadcasts. (Newsround, for children is plenty of news for all but the oldest, most mature children.)

Read books together, snuggle under blankets, watch some of the great programmes which are designed for children on television. Lots of cuddles and lots of 'it is going to be ok. You don't need to worry' type conversations will help. Children need to know that the adults in their lives have the situation under control and are keeping everyone in the family safe. They look to us for this affirmation.

I read an article recently that I wanted to share with you. It said that, at the end of this crisis, how children felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those long weeks is forgotten. I think this is important to keep in mind on a daily basis. Do keep on with the learning you are doing so well once the holidays are over but don't worry too much about your child falling behind. Once they are back at school our teachers will do what they do best – work hard to ensure that all children are supported and their academic needs are met where they are at that point. Everyone will be in the same boat! Your children's mental health and well-being are the most important thing so if learning becomes stressful, don't feel guilty at reducing what you are doing or even doing nothing for a day!

At the beginning of the Easter holidays, this is particularly important. Your family needs this two weeks of relaxation and rest more than ever. I do hope you manage to find activities to do together which bring you happiness and laughter and allow you to forget the news outside your homes, albeit for brief periods. We will be thinking of you all.

With my good wishes,

Anne Sargent
(Head Teacher)

