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Dear Parents and Carers,

Good morning, I write to you as we go into the unprecedented phase of closing the school for the vast majority of pupils. Please do bear in mind though that as children are at home you are not alone- we are still here. It is a strange time and a pressured time as adults and children are trying to comprehend the enormity of what is happening alongside the fact that they are either working from home or not.

This morning I have uploaded to the website some commercially available resources to support home learning. Over the coming hours, days and weeks I will add to educational resources we as a staff team think could be beneficial to the 'useful links page' of the website. The class pages will be greatly expanded to include Newlands specific home learning opportunities. I will also be looking to add a range of pages that will allow us to operate as a virtual community in these unprecedented times.

You might be inclined to create a minute-by-minute timetable for your children- the teachers have sent daily timetables for your children to follow. You may have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You will plan to limit technology until everything is done!

But these are the things I want you to consider...

Our children are just as scared as we are right now- for instance our year 6 are not sure if they'll ever come back, if they'll have their leaving party, their hoodies, their leavers celebration assembly (I guarantee whatever happens we will give them a proper Newlands send-off). Our children not only hear everything going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off school for weeks on end sounds exciting for some, they are probably picturing a fun time like the summer holidays, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you may see an increase in behaviour issues with your children. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protests that they can't do normal things - it will happen. You will potentially see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behaviour. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What children need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it is all going to be okay. That might mean that you need to tear up your perfect timetable and focus on giving them lots of love and attention. I know this may be hard if you have the added pressure of trying to work at home with the children there. Please try to play outside and go on walks. Bake biscuits and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Create a fitness circuit in your garden. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

Delivering a nurturing and inclusive environment to encourage growth of the individual

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single child is in this boat and they all will be okay. When we are back in the classroom, we will focus on their learning and meet their educational needs. Teachers are experts at this! They are already thinking and planning for the great 'catch up' so that we can continue. Newlands school staff are excellent teachers and Learning Support Assistants and they will work tirelessly to help children. Don't pick fights with your children because they don't want to do any activities. Don't scream at your children for not following the timetable. Don't insist on 2 hours of learning time if they are resisting it. See if you can make learning fun through their play.

If I can leave you with one thing, it is this: at the end of all of this, their mental health will be far more important than their academic skills. How they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during these weeks is gone. So keep that in mind, every single day.

Take care and stay safe,

Thank you for your cooperation and kind words during this time, don't forget, we are there for you.

With very best regards,

William Neighbour

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "W Neighm". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Head Teacher