



Larwood Academy Trust

Executive Headteacher: Mr Sean Trimble B.Ed (hons) MA NPQH

WEBB RISE, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG1 5QU

Email: admin@larwood.herts.sch.uk Telephone: 01438 236333

Website: www.larwood.herts.sch.uk Facsimile: 01438 236363

Larwood School

Deputy Headteacher: Mr Pierre Van Der Merwe – BA, NPQH

Brandles School

Headteacher: Mr David Pearce – BA (hons), PGCE, NPQH



Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

We have now had official notification that schools are to close, following governmental and Department for Education advice, due to Covid 19, but may remain open to vulnerable pupils (such as those with EHCPs), and for parents with key worker staff. The latter has now been defined and includes nurses, the Police, fire service, school based staff etc. However, please also note that the Secretary of State for Education has confirmed that health and safety, with reference to school context, staffing levels and being able to operate, are factors that only Headteachers can decide upon, as to whether a school actually stays open.

During the course of this week, we have seen staffing levels and pupil numbers drop substantially. Whilst some schools are already closed (locally, nationally and within the United Kingdom), we have remained open to try and continue some form of educational provision. Staff have been amazing! We have also respected the concerns that many of you have expressed for yourselves, your children and your extended families. I share your concerns. We are all in uncharted territory with this virus. We have also done our best to quell any worries and fears that your child may have expressed. However, having considered our position on this matter very carefully, we now believe that it is the right course of action, for both Brandles and Larwood to close from Friday 20th March, until further notice. This decision has not been taken lightly and we are acutely aware it will be difficult for many, and for a variety of reasons. However, the following have all been prominent in our thinking and planning for this:

- The situation with Covid 19 is changing daily. There are many unknowns, but it is clear that children and young people may carry the virus but many will remain healthy. Yet, many of our pupils are currently unwell.
- Staff of all ages will be effected by this. Again, the evidence seems to support that older staff are worst effected and particularly those with underlying health conditions. Our schools have many older staff and therefore more are at risk. Hence, this is why many have had to stay at home during the course of this week, and will be the same next week. Some have chosen to carry on, and some have been advised to stay at home and to follow the advice being given.
- Just like many of you, numerous staff live in a variety of extended family situations. Some care for parents, some have children, and some have partners that may be suffering from other medical conditions.
- Projections of absence for staff and actual staff attendance make our schools unsafe to run operationally



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- ***In complete honesty, I want all pupils, families, staff and their families and anyone connected to our communities to be able to come through this period of time, healthy and well enough for whatever comes next!***
- Just about every class/group in each school is effected by this
- Making some pupils come into school when their peers are not, or sisters and brothers are not, gives out very mixed messages about the virus, and how we value our special needs children and their health. We also know that this will cause issues at home!
- The recently introduced policy of social distancing, aimed at reducing the spread of the virus and enabling the NHS to operate and deal with serious cases, will only be successful if everybody follows the correct procedures. I cannot see how schools can be excluded from this situation.

Therefore, with full support from our Trustee's, both Larwood and Brandles schools will be closed from Friday 20th March, until further notice. We will be reviewing this situation daily, but cannot realistically see matters changing that much during the course of the next two weeks. I cannot predict how this situation with the virus will evolve, and how future government plans may roll out. Therefore at the moment, I cannot give any assurances of when a 'normal' school day will resume. I hope that it is as soon as possible, but stress that safe staffing and the health of all within our community will drive my decision-making.

This letter is supplementing phone calls that senior leadership and admin staff made today to all parents. Where we could not speak to you directly, we left a message. One or two cases left us unable to leave a message but we are sending this letter to all parents as well.

To support continued learning during this time, as best we can, each school will be doing the following:

- Sending appropriate work for your child to access and complete whilst at home
- Marking and providing feedback for work where possible and helpful
- Staff will be using their work email address and family contacts to share work
- Staff will be available at key times to answer any questions you may have via email.
- We will put together some form of system/payment for those families that access free school meals
- We will continue to offer advice and checks will be made, where appropriate in relation to pupil well-being.



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You will note that the work is being sent to you, without due pressure for completion. This will be up to you to decide what is appropriate for your child when they are at home. I am very aware that this could be a cause of conflict for you, or may trigger an outburst. You have complete discretion about how you deploy any work when sent.

Safeguarding pupils.

If during the enforced closure period, you encounter any safeguarding concerns for your child, then please follow the usual protocols, that you would follow when not at school. Therefore, dependant on circumstances, this may be calling social services (if you have an attached social worker, calling them directly) or calling the Police.

You may want to call Children's social care using this number-0300 123 4043

Please also note that Mrs Osobu and Mrs Ford will be monitoring emails and may still be able to offer telephone or email advice/support. If you do need them please email as below:

Bianca.osobu@larwood.herts.sch.uk

Sian.ford@larwood.herts.sch.uk

Please note that our schools will not be staffed all of the time during this situation, however, regular checks will be made on calls that are left and/or emails. When we are able to open again, you will be informed directly, via email/telephone call, alongside taxi companies etc. We will also maintain our websites with updated messages of any changes.

Please note that I am confident that we will get through this period of challenge and uncertainty. There will be some difficult weeks, and no doubt some other factors that are yet to be revealed. Ensuring that our schools are as safe as possible will always be my priority.

Once again, I do appreciate that this presents everybody with a complex and difficult situation. Parents that I have spoken to recently have expressed their overwhelming support and your many messages of kindness and thanks that are really appreciated. It is humbling to work within such a great community of families.

I will continue to monitor events as they unfold, take on board advice, alongside ensuring that our schools are as safe as they can be during this time. We look forward to returning to some form of normality as soon as it is safe to do so, for all concerned.



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Useful resources for pupils at Larwood:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/> (resources for primary /secondary/SEND-free one month trial available when needed for parents)

<https://www.educationcity.com/> (Primary only and free trail available)

<https://www.prodigygame.com/> Maths related games and lessons-no charge

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize> -resources/quiz's etc. for all age groups and free

Yours sincerely

S D Trimble

Headteacher



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