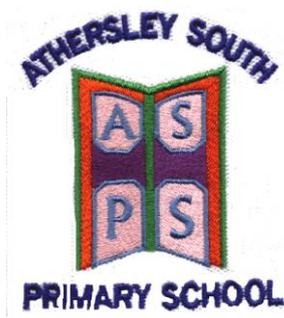


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14th April 2020

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families and friends are all well and you are getting used to the new routines that we have all had to adopt since school closed to the large majority of pupils on 20th March. As we move into our 4th week in lockdown I wanted to 'check in' with you all and provide some updates. I would also like to take this opportunity to let you know that while we are open and operating each day, with a skeleton staff providing emergency childcare to those who need it, there is also someone available to take your call in the school office between 8.50am and 3.00pm, please call if we can help in any way or if you have any questions.

Home Learning

This week should have been the second week of the Easter break and, as such, I would encourage you all to have a break from home learning and enjoy your family time together. If your child has completed the work packs that they brought home as we closed, please look on our website on the Parents tab, under the Learning Links branch where you will find a number of links to different websites that your child can access. The direct link to this page can be found here: <https://www.athersleysouthprimary.co.uk/parents/learning-links>

In addition, in response to the ongoing closure of schools, I am excited to be able to inform you that we are currently in the process of setting up an account with an online learning platform that will allow your child to access different activities, challenges and learning from home. We hope to have this set up and active by next week, week beginning 20th April 2020. If all goes according to plan, there is an App to download and each individual child will then receive their own log in details. Teachers and school staff will be able to upload activities and children can respond. Teachers will then be able to acknowledge and see what your child has been doing and 'like' or comment on the uploaded items. This App has been trialled within another school within the ECM Academy Trust (who we remain in the process of converting to) and it has been very successful. For those who cannot access the internet or do not have a mobile device, we will offer paper copies.

Free School Meals

We understand that we are currently within challenging times and that circumstances for families may have changed and therefore we would encourage those parents that meet the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals to apply via the link below:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/schools-and-learning/free-school-meals/>

The criteria for Free School Meals, which are also detailed on the above website, are as follows:

Your child will qualify for free school meals if they're in full-time education and you receive one of the following benefits:

- income support
- income based job seekers allowance
- income related employment and support allowance
- guarantee element of state pension credit
- child tax credit with no working tax credit and have an income as assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £16,190 (subject to change annually)
- support under Part 1V of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you receive)

Children who receive a qualifying benefit in their own right are also entitled to receive free school meals.

Your child won't qualify for free school meals if you're receiving working tax credits and disabled working tax credits, except for the 4 week run-on paid after you've stopped qualifying for working tax credits.

You will probably have seen in the media that the Government has launched a new scheme for schools to use in order for us to send vouchers electronically. This has now been set up and a special thanks to Mrs Boreham for dealing with all the complex administrative work involved to ensure that eligible families have received their vouchers throughout this difficult time, either electronically or via the post. If you are eligible for FSM, are currently receiving your vouchers by post but are able to provide us with an email address, please do so as this will ensure you receive your vouchers in a more timely and efficient manner. You can contact the school office Monday-Friday between 8.50am and 3.00pm.

BMBC Coronavirus Help and Support

Barnsley Council has created a special section within their main website that offers a range of advice and support relating to all aspects of the Council, how services are affected by the current pandemic and how they can support individuals and families during this difficult time e.g. with employment and financial difficulties. It can be accessed here: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-coronavirus-advice-and-guidance/>. There are a number of links that signpost to who to talk to, contact numbers as well as online services. If you are having any difficulties and cannot find the answer you are looking for on the website, please call school and we will endeavour to help if we can. I would also encourage you to look on our school website as there are a number of links on there too <https://www.athersleysouthprimary.co.uk/parents/covid-19-communications>

Post-Easter Emergency Childcare Provision

As we continue through these exceptional and difficult times, we are looking at the provision that we need to continue to make in the coming weeks, assuming we remain closed to most pupils. To enable us to continue to work within the Government guidelines, and minimise the risk of spreading the Coronavirus infection we will continue, as we have done to date, to provide emergency childcare provision for the children who are most in need of care. Government guidance has not changed:

'The continuing 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.....It is important to underline that schools, all childcare settings (including early years settings, childminders and providers of childcare for school-age children), colleges and other educational establishments, remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.'

If your working circumstances have changed, or do so while schools remain closed, and you subsequently find that you require childcare provision due to being a key worker with no option to work from home, please contact school by telephone to discuss your needs and requirements and we will endeavour to help and are more than happy to do so. However, please do not abuse this opportunity and only use us where there is NO alternative. This will ensure the safety of all our children and our staff as we strive to keep schools open for key staff that must work. Thank you to everyone for your understanding and for working with us to ensure this has been the case at our school. We appreciate your support in this matter.

ACTION REQUIRED! If you require emergency childcare for the weeks beginning 20th April and 27th April please contact school by Thursday 16th April at 3.00pm at the latest so that registers can be updated and the appropriate levels of staffing can be arranged. Please be aware that if you have not already done so, you will need to bring proof of your key worker status on the first day that your child(ren) attends.

Please also be aware that if your child does attend, they will need to bring a packed lunch with them as we are unable to offer a catering service at this time.

Primary School Places – ‘Offers Day’ - 16 April 2020

In order to follow the guidance from Public Health, the BMBC School Admissions Service is now fully operating on a home-working basis, which inevitably has had an impact on their service provision. However, for those of you with children who are due to start full time school in September, you will be pleased to know that **primary school allocations will still be made on 16 April 2020** and parents will be notified by email or letter depending on the route of application. Please be reminded that this information comes directly from school admissions and not ourselves. We receive confirmation of the placement offers at the same time as yourselves.

At the moment BMBC School Admissions cannot be contacted by telephone, so during this period they are asking that you contact them by emailing admissions@barnsley.gov.uk. Admissions staff will be focusing on answering emails at this time, so you should receive a response within 24 hours. If you are having any difficulties, or do not have an email account, please contact us at school and we can contact school admissions on your behalf. You can find out more about how BMBC Admissions are currently operating and the disruptions to their service by following this link: [disruptions to our school admissions service due to COVID-19 \(coronavirus\)](#).

School Re-opening

A real sense of uncertainty remains for all of us with regard to when schools may re-open and how this will be organised. We, like you, were only given two days notice of the decision to close schools, although we had of course prepared for the inevitable. Unfortunately, the uncertainty is fuelled by false news reports that suggest decisions have already been made, when in fact they have not. Please be reassured that as soon as we are notified of the Government's intentions, we will make the necessary plans and arrangements and be in touch with yourselves. We are very much looking forward to the day when Athersley South Primary can fully re-open and the time when our school community will be together again😊. Please pass on our very best wishes to your child(ren), we do truly miss them and look forward to catching up when all of this is over.

Thank you all again for your patience and support in these challenging and unprecedented times, and please do take care and stay safe.

Yours faithfully

Mrs E Sanderson