



# LONG MEADOW SCHOOL

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Friday 12 June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Well there it goes, week two has come and gone and I think this one was even quicker!

Next week will see your child's annual school report coming out to you. However this year there have had to be some changes. Firstly, we were hoping to trial the new time of after Easter for the report to come out but unfortunately, due to the lockdown, this was not possible. It will also not be possible to provide a parent consultation linked to the reports as you can imagine. Please also note that due to the reports being sent out electronically, my usual handwritten comments are of a generic nature for this year only - I hope you understand why. Due to the high volume of the reports etc., these will be sent out at various points across the week. Please do not contact us until **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June** if you have not received your child's report. Please also remember the report is only a reflection of how far your child has come across two terms at LMS.

Also, this week the government announced that their original plan for the wider opening of primary school was reviewed and is now not going to take place. We know that this may upset children and parents whose children will not be returning to school until September at the earliest, but we must adhere to the guidance, based on the science, that is provided to us. However, as a school, we do not have the capacity to open our school to other year groups before September. As a school we are currently making plans for increased contact for children not in school or not in eligible year groups. We will share these with you once they are complete. We know that whatever we do will not replace all children returning to 'normal school' but we will do our best to make sure all children have contact with school before September.

This week would have seen both the Year 1 phonics screening take place as well as Year 3 going to Caldecotte. Both not happening brings an element of sadness to LMS. Firstly, as a school we have thrown ourselves whole heartedly into improving our teaching and learning of phonics through ReadWriteInc. and were hoping to see the progress the children had made, alas this is not the case this year. Secondly, school trips and visits are an important part of life and LMS and children not experiencing these is a definite loss. Parents who have paid towards school trips will be contacted by Mrs Justice in the coming weeks with details of what will be refunded and when.

Finally this week, with this new stage of lockdown and the news that some years will not be returning to school before September at the earliest, I thought it would be good to remind everyone about how we can support our children's mental health and well-being. I have personally noticed a marked difference in my own children (both who are not in eligible year groups to go back); these changes are not huge and obvious but instead are small but regular. I hope this guidance can help.

## **Helping children cope with stress**

**Listen and acknowledge:** Children may respond to stress in different ways. Signs may be emotional (for example, they may be upset, distressed, anxious, angry or agitated), behavioural (for example, they may become more clingy or more withdrawn, or they may wet the bed), or physical (for example, they may experience stomach aches).

Look out for any changes in their behaviour. Children may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Children who communicate differently to their peers may rely on you to interpret their feelings. Listen to them, acknowledge their concern and give them extra love and attention if they need it.

[MindEd](#) is a free online educational resource on children's mental health for all adults, which can support parents and carers through these exceptional circumstances.

**Provide clear information about the situation:** Children want to feel assured that their parents and carers can keep them safe. One of the best ways to achieve this is by talking openly about what is happening and providing honest answers to any questions they have. Explain what is being done to keep them and their loved ones safe, including any actions they can take to help, such as washing their hands more often than usual. Use words and explanations that they can understand. There are resources available to help you do this, including the Children's Commissioner's [Children's Guide to Coronavirus](#), or the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) have produced a [storybook developed by and for children around the world affected by coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Make sure you use reliable sources of information such as [GOV.UK](#) or the [NHS website](#) – there is a lot of misleading information from other sources that can create stress for you and your family. It will not always be possible to provide answers to all the questions that children and young people may ask, or to address all their concerns, so focus on listening and acknowledging their feelings to help them feel supported.

**Be aware of your own reactions:** Remember that children often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives, so how you respond to the situation is very important. It is important to manage your own emotions and remain calm, listen to and acknowledge children's concerns, speak kindly to them, and answer any questions they have honestly. For further information on how to look after your own mental wellbeing during the pandemic, see the [guidance on how to look after your own mental health and wellbeing](#) or visit [Every Mind Matters](#).

**Connect regularly:** If it is necessary for you and your children to be in different locations to normal (for example, due to staying at home in different locations) make sure you still have regular and frequent contact via the phone or video calls with them. Try to help your child understand what arrangements are being made for them and why in simple terms. Support safe ways for children to maintain social interaction with their friends, for example via phone or video calls.

**Create a new routine:** Life is changing for all of us for a while. Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine, especially if they are not at school:

- make a plan for the day or week that includes time for learning, playing and relaxing
- access Google Classroom and supplement this if you so wish. The Department for Education has published a [list of recommended online educational resources for home schooling](#)
- encourage maintaining a balance between being on and offline and discover new ideas for activities to do from home. The [Children's Commissioner guide](#) signposts to some ideas to help fight boredom
- children ideally need to be active for 60 minutes a day, which can be more difficult when spending longer periods of time indoors. Plan time outside if you can do so safely or see [Change4Life](#) for ideas for indoor games and activities
- don't forget that sleep is important for mental and physical health, so try to keep to existing bedtime routines
- it may be tempting to give children treats such as sweets or chocolate but this is not good for their health, especially as they may not be as physically active as normal. See [Change4Life](#) for ideas for healthy treats

**Limit exposure to media and talk more about what they have seen and heard:** Like adults, children may become more distressed if they see repeated coverage about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the media. A complete news blackout is also rarely helpful as they are likely to find out from other sources, such as online or through friends. Try to avoid turning the television off or closing web pages when children come into the room. This can pique their interest to find out what is happening and their imagination can take over. Instead, consider limiting the amount of exposure you and your family have to media coverage.

Children will also hear things from friends and get information from social media. Talk to them about what is happening and ask them what they have heard. Try to answer their questions honestly and reassure them appropriately.

As a school we will continue to develop the support for our children and families. This is new to us all but we are determined to provide a curriculum as equitable as possible for children whether they are at home or at school.

Thank you for your continued support and stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Philip Gray  
Headteacher