08/05/2020

Good evening to you all. I hope that you and your families are heathy and well. These are very strange times indeed, and needless to say there is no part of our normal lives that has not been affected by the current public health situation.

In this quick video message I just was to thank all of you for taking the time to complete the survey sent to you at the beginning of this week. I was very important for us as educators to gain an insight into how all of you were coping with the new pedagogy that is distance learning. It is clear from the data from our survey that you are making a marvellous effort to support your children in every way that you can. For this, all of our team is very grateful.

The main purpose of our survey was to gather data that will help to inform our distance learning practice going forward to the end of this school year. The main principles that have guided our practice so far will remain the same. We will continue to connect with our pupils on a regular basis, and we will always be ready to support them or yourselves should the need arise. We also want you to maintain a sense of perspective about what is achievable for you in your own home contexts. We would like you to do what you can when you can. If that’s not possible for you on a daily or weekly basis that is absolutely fine. Your own home contexts are unique to you. As I have previously said your home is your home and it is not a classroom. Please remember that learning takes many forms, not just formal work from textbooks. We know how challenging it is for so many of you to carry on your children’s formal education while trying to run a household, care for other family members and in many cases work from home. Please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or the teachers for support or advice if the need arises.

Our staff met remotely yesterday to discuss and digest the survey data. Over the past month, our staff have upskilled and participated in Zoom Education webinar’s which were run by the education centre Tralee. As a result of our participation we have just this week been given fully licensed access to Zoom education. Since our school was closed there has been a desire amongst the teachers to maintain some sort of visual contact with our pupils. The data from the survey also seems to indicate that this is also something that many parents would like. We feel that it would help to build on existing practice and enhance further the learning experience and outcomes for our pupils.

So from next week onwards our class teachers will send recorded video messages to their class groups. As a general rule the breakdown of each video will be as follows: In each video teachers will offer some generic feedback on work they have received and corrected from the previous week. They will then talk through the tasks being set for the coming week, set out their expectations around engagement with the tasks and flag any areas of potential difficulty within each task. Each teacher will deliver their video in their own unique way, in line with their own unique teaching style. The video’s will be concise and focused. Please remember that these videos are being sent in good faith for the betterment of your child’s education during these difficult times and they are not to be shared with anybody outside of your homestead. Any videos that we would like to disseminate to the wider public will be shared on our Facebook page or website. Our SET team will continue to connect with you through the usual channels, and are ready to give you and your child advice and support when it is needed.

Yesterday we also discussed the fact that with the move into the summer season, the fine weather and longer evenings, your children’s interest in engaging with distance learning may begin to wane. There is absolutely nothing wrong with your children want to spend most of their time outside playing and having fun. It’s something that we strongly encourage! When they are doing this they are learning, and enhancing their physical and mental wellbeing. This is something we are very conscious of, and our teachers will do not want enforce barriers to the children enjoying the long summer days in any way. Remember do what you can when you can, and if possible keep your teacher in the loop.

At some stage after May 18th it is our intention to send home the books that are still in our school building. This will take careful planning and we will be conscious of adhering to public health guidelines at all times. We do not want to create a situation that will reflect badly on our school and damage our reputation. More detail on this will follow in the coming week.

To conclude I would just like to say thanks for what you are doing, and we look forward to meeting you all in person again. Our pupils remain foremost in our thoughts as we move through the remainder of this school year and into the next one. Please be assured that we will do our best to make up for the time we have lost when we are back in session. There is nothing that isn’t redeemable once we are all back to school and in good health. I will be in further contact with you and the pupils over the coming weeks.

For now slan and take care.