



School Newsletter

Tuesday 12th May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you are all well.

Like me, I suspect most of you listened to the Prime Minister's speech on Sunday and have followed the news ever since. The last six weeks of lockdown have certainly taken their toll, and, as a parent, I know there will be mixed emotions about what the Prime Minister said regarding primary schools and nurseries partially reopening from 1st June as the Government tries to kick-start the economy.

Some of you would have greeted this news with positivity, as the lockdown for some of our families has been extremely difficult. There are families who are dealing with financial hardship, pressure from employers to get back to work, lack of space or privacy and routine, which can subsequently have a detrimental effect on the well-being of the household. Also, the novelty of home learning may be taking its toll as the enthusiasm wanes and children and adults begin to get tired of this 'new normal'.

Conversely, there will be others who are enjoying aspects of this 'new normal' and have found that lockdown has encouraged a more slowed-down, reflective pace of life, giving them an opportunity to enjoy more time with their children, and relish this home-schooling experience. Indeed, time may have been found to complete those jobs that cannot usually be justified due to lack of it: homes may have been decorated or gardens tidied. Others will fear that the worst is certainly not over and will raise concerns about schools safely social distancing children; (especially the youngest children).

Whatever your point of view, rest assured that the safety of your children and the staff at RAPS is, as always, paramount. The Department of Education has now released documentation on how children should return to school from the June 1st, as will Unions and other commentators over the coming days. For your information, I have included below a link to the government's guidance 'What parents and carers need to know about schools and other education settings during the coronavirus outbreak'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

The Leadership Team at Viking will, of course, be looking at all this information with great interest, and plans will be outlined and risk assessments made. Rest assured though that these will be carefully considered with everyone's best interests at heart - no rash decisions will be made about the children coming back to school.

For now, our school will continue to be open for the children of critical workers and children who may be deemed as the most vulnerable. Home learning will continue on our daily blogs. As I said before, the teachers are working hard to ensure that the activities are as accessible as possible. We are totally understanding of the fact that this is, in no way, replicating normal school life. As soon as possible, the Trust and school will layout our plans for the possibility of your child coming back to school over the coming weeks, but again, please rest assured that the safety of your child will always come first.

Keep safe.

Mr Budge

Still in the News !

RAPS Children's Art Brightens Up Cancer Centre

Children of key workers at Ramsgate Arts primary are helping to brighten up the Viking Day Unit chemotherapy centre at the QEQM Hospital in Margate. The pupils who are attending school during the current lockdown were invited to create some pictures for staff and patients and set to work with bright and bold colours. The young artists created multi-coloured collages that also featured rainbows and a message saying 'NHS – thank you'.

The request came from Carrie Merry, the chemotherapy unit manager, whose daughter Lauren is a Teaching Assistant at RAPS. Carrie was delighted when she received a selection of artwork. She said: "They are wonderful and it has certainly brightened up my morning putting them up in our display cases. I'm sure it will be a talking point with our patients for many weeks to come. I want to say a huge thank you from myself, all my team at Viking and all our patients."



Head of School Nick Budge said: "The Viking Day Unit is an integral and vitally important part of our hospital service and carries out splendid work with such dedication, care and professionalism. Our key worker children are working hard in their lessons in school during the lockdown and they jumped at the chance to create artwork for the hospital. It was a great opportunity for them to demonstrate their artwork skills and empathise with our community. RAPS is always happy to support those people and organisations that work tirelessly and selflessly for the benefit of others – the QEQM is a shining example of that."

RAPS Online Worry Button To Help Children

In uncertain times like the current pandemic the level of worry facing children can leave them feeling insecure and frightened. Ramsgate Arts Primary has introduced a special link on their school website to offer help and understanding to pupils and their families. Pupils simply have to click on the 'worried' button on the home page tool bar. This takes them to a page where they can then click directly to contact the teaching staff and write down their concerns on an easy-to-read contact form.

Deputy Head of School Hanna Beech said: "All the communications will be dealt with quickly and seriously to help alleviate any fears and explain any concerns our children are experiencing. It is another level of support for them. We are sure that their families or carers are doing a fabulous job in this respect – having another avenue to explore and connect with our staff is just another way of letting them know that people are listening. For many of our children our school is a vital social link – not being at school for weeks on end can make them feel distanced and remote, although we have a comprehensive interactive education programme running to support their learning. The worry button is important for their wellbeing, and this is something that we take extremely seriously."

It is a logical extension of a successful in-school initiative to help deal with their worries - each classroom has a Worry Box where they post their thoughts about things that may be concerning them; there is also a central Worry Box in the main corridor. Other wellbeing initiatives include yoga classes and basic soothing massage technique sessions.

Head of School Mr Nick Budge added: "Our online information also offers children and parents/carers quick links to a variety of groups that can help with advice and support – they are not isolated, we are there for them."

Tree Planting Boosts RAPS Landscape Project

The Isle of Thanet Tree and Wood Initiative is helping the landscape project in the grounds at Ramsgate Arts Primary School. Working alongside Thanet Council's tree officer Kevin Pressland, the ITTWI has selected local sites to benefit from the planting of four specimen trees. The tree given to the school is a prehistoric Maidenhair Tree (Ginkgo Biloba), selected for the site with the help of the initiative's patron, horticulturalist and TV presenter Frances Tophill from BBC Gardeners' World. She said: "Ginkgos are some of my favourite trees - so useful so beautiful and so ancient. They remind us that human interactions with nature have been around for as long as we have. And a bit of perspective, especially at a time like this which is so challenging to everyone, can bring a little hope, especially to those pupils who will have the chance to see that tree grow and change through the years and through the seasons. I think that kind of sight can bring a little magic that we all need in day to day life."



The Ginkgo and the other specimen trees for other sites in the district were given by ITTWI's official supplier Premium Plants near Canterbury as a thank you to the area following an initial successful first phase of tree planting locally. Ramsgate Arts Primary has also taken delivery of 12 saplings including Mountain Ash, Whitebeam and Wild Cherry. Bev Perkins from the town's Friends of Ellington Park Committee offered them to the school as surplus from a project at the park. She nurtured them for several years and when she heard about the RAPS tree planting scheme it was agreed to support it.

Art teacher Karen Vost, who was at the planting with Head of School Nick Budge, said: "The school is on a journey to improve its landscape areas and it was lovely that the first of our trees came from this important community project. Our aim is to support more natural green spaces, biodiversity and appreciation of the natural world."

Mr Budge said: "We are touched and thrilled by the generosity of the donation of all these beautiful trees. Our Landscape 2020 project is all about creating an outside learning area in our grounds where children can become closely involved with nature and the environment and learn important lessons for the rest of their lives. Our children who were in school helped with planting the saplings. They also found some mini beasts in the earth including a grub beetle. The provision of the trees is a huge boost to that project – they will be cherished and cared for by our children."

Children's Wings of Hope and Protection – A Public Thank You

A huge pair of rainbow-coloured wings, to say a public thank you to frontline teams during the pandemic, has been created by children of key workers. Children from the Viking Academy Trust schools – Upton Juniors, Chilton Primary, and Ramsgate Arts Primary – joined forces to design and paint the symbolic gesture.

The children are all being taught in separate school groups with their own teachers at Ramsgate Arts Primary in Newington Road, Ramsgate, during the lockdown. They joined together to create parts of the colourful art installation which is now proudly fixed to the front of the RAPS site.

Michaela Lewis, Executive Head Teacher of the Viking Academy Trust, said: "We are united in our support for those who strive against the odds day by day, minute by minute, throughout this pandemic. And our children from the three trust schools united to create a symbolic message for all to see – the wings are spread wide, encompassing the protection that we are being given nationwide and around the globe by those essential workers who are tending the sick and vulnerable, keeping us safe, ensuring vital supplies are reaching those in need, and protecting us in our time of greatest need. Our children wanted to do something to show their support – this is a perfect way to do it."

