April 2020

Dear parent/carer,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well at this challenging time.

With the extension of the lockdown until at least 11th May it appears likely that schools will remain closed for at least this duration and possibly longer. I’m aware there are some media reports suggesting we may re-open in three weeks’ time but at the moment the government have been clear that there is no set date for this.

During this period of closure the school continues to remain open for vulnerable students and for those of the families of essential workers. If you believe you fall in to either of the categories and wish for your child to come in to school, please email us using schoolclosure@merrillacsademy.derby.sch.uk or phone the school office which is open daily.

**Remote learning and booklets**

I’m hugely grateful for the way the teaching and support staff have risen to the challenge of creating remote schemes of learning and also printed booklets in what is only 4 weeks since we were forced to close. Whilst there is still a great deal of development on-going in this area, staff have worked tirelessly to ensure students are being set regular work that is challenging and engaging. Please continue to encourage your child to engage with this and check our website for updates. You may also have seen the recent announcement from government regarding the Oak National Academy and the new BBC learning resources, both of which are currently being added to our curriculum offer.

**Online safety**

Whilst students are spending longer periods online to support their learning is a huge positive, it does carry some associated risk. You will find on the COVID 19 Home learning/off site learning and safeguarding section of our website useful information related to online safety and cyber bullying which I would recommend you familiarise yourself with. I would also ask you to remind your child that they can report any issues of cyber bullying to the school by accessing the Stop bullying or safeguarding concern links which will send an email to the Student Engagement and Safeguarding team within the Academy.

**Absence from learning due to illness**

From Monday 27th April the DFE (Department for Education) has asked schools and Academies to collect data on absence from learning due to illness. To enable us to do this we require you to notify the Academy if your child is unable to complete work at home due to illness. This information is for our records and will enable us to identify those learners that may need additional support due to gaps in learning and health reasons. **It will not affect their attendance record.**

**As a parent/carer you will need to take the following action:**

* Contact the Academy on the first day of absence to let us know if your child is unable to complete work due to illness.
* You can do this by calling the main school number on 01332 576777 and either speaking to the receptionist or leaving a message on the main school answer phone (**not the attendance answer phone**)
* Alternatively if you prefer to email you can email on: attendance@merrillacademy.derby.sch.uk
* If you would prefer to speak to a member of staff regarding the absence please state this in your call or email and somebody will call you back the same day.
* Please notify the school again when your child has returned to remote learning so that we can update our records. You do not need to call school daily.
* During this period we will not require medical evidence or a letter from home.

Thank you for your help and support with this.

Take care and stay safe

J Harlow

Headteacher