



**DOWNSEND**  
SCHOOL



Proud to be nominated in the  
**Independent Schools of  
the Year 2019 Awards**

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Dear Parent

As you will be aware, the Government has this afternoon announced the closure of all schools in England from the end of Friday 20 March due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our school premises will continue as normal tomorrow and Friday. The Easter term will still end on 2 April and we are planning on the Summer Term commencing as previously advised on 21 April, whether physically at school, or virtually.

We are exploring the means by which we could offer supervised care for the children of key workers. Please let me know tomorrow, Thursday 19 March, on [ian.thorpe@downsend.co.uk](mailto:ian.thorpe@downsend.co.uk), if you feel you may fall into this category and we will confirm details shortly.

I appreciate this news is unsettling but want to reassure you of the steps we are taking to provide support for our pupils and parents during the closure. As you know, we've been working closely with our Cognita colleagues in Asia, where some countries have had mandatory school closures for many weeks and also more recently in Spain and Switzerland. Our plan for Downsend is informed by the practice they've put in place and we are confident we have an effective strategy for our children to continue learning. We have recently refreshed the digital technology in our school and conducted training in its use which means our teaching staff are well equipped to make the transition to digital learning for your child.

Today, we sent specific information to you about our plans for online and remote learning in the weeks ahead. Clearly this will be a new way of working and learning for us all and we expect to adapt the programme as we go. We appreciate that there will be an impact on parents and our plan includes advice for you. With that in mind, our Group Wellbeing Director Beth Kerr has prepared the attached 'Be Well Tips' for parents on supporting your child during a school closure.

Thank you in advance for your unfailing support at this challenging time; we appreciate it more than you know. Our teachers have been preparing well for the possibility of a closure, even though they, too, have been anxious about unfolding events. All our efforts are concentrated on two priorities: maintaining the wellbeing of our children and staff and ensuring the continuity of their education in the days and weeks to come. In parent surveys, you frequently comment on the professionalism and dedication of Downsend staff. Never has this been more evident than over the past week and, if you only see a person's true character in times of adversity, then my team's have shone like beacons this week. They have never taken a backward step, in spite of their own worries, and I could not be more proud of them for their response to this particular crisis. They have worked tirelessly to develop our online and remote program, and you can be assured of our continued dedication in the weeks ahead.

All teachers will be on their school E-mail address and will be contactable either directly or through the School Office. We will continue to communicate closely with you throughout the closure and will update as soon as we have more information. Please do not hesitate to contact me personally at [ian.thorpe@downsend.co.uk](mailto:ian.thorpe@downsend.co.uk) if you have any further questions.

Kind regards

Ian Thorpe  
Headmaster

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