**To           :              Headteachers**

**CC           :              Chairs of Governors, Foundation Governors, ex-officio clergy**

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               22nd April 2020**

Dear colleagues

I hope that you were able to have some alternative and enjoyable family time over the Easter weekend. A very different start to a new school term this week, with all sorts of challenges but also opportunities. You may have heard the Secretary of State for Education at Sunday’s podium broadcast when he outlined some of the government’s responses to supporting children during the lockdown, but significantly, also beyond. The government’s commitment to providing laptops, dongles and online resources for targeted groups of children must be applauded.

The initiation of the National Oaks Academy (details attached) as an online resource of lessons and learning activities,  along with the enormous amount of sessions being launched on TV by the BBC this week, will be of benefit to many children and families : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

I’m particularly grateful to those school leaders who are confident in sharing messages with parents and carers that they do not have to feel guilty or anxious that they cannot replicate ‘school’ at home. Learning at home, with the support of family members will never replicate the social, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of a school day – with the community and values at its heart.  Equally, the opportunities for deep learning and experiences of a different kind with family members cannot be replicated by schools. So let’s affirm parents and carers, encouraging them to engage with their children on a whole host of levels that perhaps they didn’t do previously, or did for limited times.

A shared bike ride may not have been a family experience for some previously – but now is a time that this can be maximised, with long term effects. Teaching one’s child to paint a wall, plant seeds, change a tyre on a bike, cook and bake, read a book together are all valuable and valid learning experiences that we can promote and endorse.

**Our Weekly Resources**

We hope that some of the resources we are sending each week might be ways of bringing parents and children together over a focused activity, video, song or craft. This week’s **Standing Together** Stamps activity, along with the **Rwanda picture challenge** demonstrate that our commitment to this year’s project can involve parents in a fun way! Encouraging parents to listen to **Stormzy** and think about his lyrics – well……..!

Please also remember our Rwandan friends who regularly pray for our schools, and ask us to pray for them as they continue in lockdown, often with limited resources.

There are lots of interviews on the radio with self-help practitioners, clinical psychologists and positive thinking trainers, thankfully often saying similar things – without the driver of trying to self a book or video! A repeat message seems to be that many people fluctuate from coping with lockdown, to tolerating it, to having ‘down days’ – and the message is that we need to go with the flow and not try to repress the times when we sometimes feel low and sad with the situation. A key message though, is to use the experience of such down days to focus and help us move forward.

I received this story from a friend – I haven’t seen it for years, but it spoke to me and I hope might bring something to you :

***An old man had a habit of early morning walks on the beach. One day, after a storm, he saw a human figure in the distance moving like a dancer. As he came closer he saw that it was a young woman and she was not dancing but was reaching down to the sand, picking up a starfish and very gently throwing them into the ocean.***

***"Young woman," he asked, "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"***

***"The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die."***

***"But young woman, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it? You cannot possibly make a difference."***

***The young woman listened politely, paused and then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves, saying……………………………..***

***"It made a difference for that one."***

**Bedtime Stories read by Headteachers and Teachers**

You may have seen that a number of famous children’s authors are posting online videos of themselves reading short stories – often at bedtime.  A great way of promoting reading, but why not use this example of lockdown initiatives by setting up a rota of your school staff to post a weekly video of someone reading a bedtime story on your school website / school mailing to children and parents? The connection with school will be reinforced, and will bring smiles, especially if the staff member is sitting on their bed in PJs reading the story!

I’ve asked Headteacher **Lizzie Granger** from Portsmouth Diocese to do it this week, and share it here as an example and so you might be inspired <http://fosay.co.uk>  Next week Headteacher **Andy Poole** from Winchester Diocese will be featured, again to show you how easy, but engaging and impactful this might be for your school community.

In the weeks to come, watch out for some special bedtime story readers that I’ve asked to join us from their homes!

**Free online books** are available to children, assisting at this time when the local library and school library is not accessible. Please see the **‘Read up a storm’** pdf attached.

**A virtual art exhibition**

The Farmington Institute helped set up a Cathedral Tour of Gary Bunt's painting of the New Testament stories in a modern setting. Each painting is accompanied by a short poem written by Gary. Unfortunately, owing to the pandemic, the Cathedral Tour came to a halt in Ely after a great start in Liverpool. It was due to go on to Winchester and Ripon, with the final exhibition being in London.

However there is a lovely film of the exhibition which I thought you might like to see. I also wondered, if you thought it appropriate, whether you might like to use it, or some of it, with your children and families,  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaf0xOOsWCY&feature=youtu.be](https://url6.mailanyone.net/v1/?m=1jOyxN-0004Bd-4b&i=57e1b682&c=QMOxyZ_w_dxKDRSAXTei1eyDo9tiYqV7uQxF9xAH2ouINIioEwzh3Rkoi5-89HMYQj1pygapStTNfZdxEIWv-6CacTakCjEWJDxAo5WtR8CgsD2HLUGVrQLp6UE6r6WQOHOnRQt_KDX4Ot48XGGAyPf-BX0O2p3XaXoI3oW4M3Pkn4nmHEpglJaKJ0liCxQJcCwqypg7szaqgdKYFvSfnGkFuabXnLReVZjQJKID-IJp_gbefY7c_qfsTw-eBdMWyd07jtPHxtnnZmlCNBtneQ)

**Froxfield Tulips**

Attached are photos sent to us by **Gilly Hollis, Chair of Governors at Froxfield Primary**. The yellow tulips were planted by the children back in November with the help of volunteers from  the local gardening club. This was inspired by one of our Area Briefings about Holocaust Memorial Day when we mentioned bunches of 6  yellow tulips being used by Jewish communities to honour the 6 million murdered, and to recognise the support by the people of Holland.  Gilly says : *I picked up on this as it seemed to follow nicely the Polli Promise and Bee Inspired project that we’d found so inspiring last year and with which the gardening club had also been involved. Regretfully with ‘Lockdown’ the children won’t be able to see the tulips in flower so I’ve photographed them - and when I did, I counted them and there are actually 75 tulips! That was a poignant coincidence indeed.*

**Good Friday Cross placing photos**

Thank you to schools who are looking to collect photos of the crosses that children may have been secretly placing, in response to Sue Bowen’s Good Friday broadcast. Sue has put together another activity that they may find enjoyable – attached is the **Make A Family Cross** activity sheet – enjoy, and do send us photos!

**News:**

Several Headteachers have contacted us regarding **SIAMS** inspections and plans, particularly as we would have been coming to the final year of the current cycle. Clearly nothing is set in stone at the moment, but in my weekly meetings with the CofE National Office, we feed in questions and receive responses from the DfE and Ofsted on a range of matters. With regard to SIAMS all I can report at the moment is that all Section 48 Inspections that are cancelled, but importantly, no decisions have been taken about any re-scheduling. As soon as this information is available, I’ll let you know.

**Sex and Relationships Education** – thank you for feeding in to the productive meetings with schools and governors over recent months, and were about to circulate an update when Covid 19 changed everyone’s priorities. We have not received any information from the DfE regarding any change in consultation expectations and timing, but I have raised the matter nationally. We await any update as I’m conscious that any planned consultation activities that are not purely functional online consultations, have had to be postponed in the current situation.

Many of you will remember **Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham**, from his time in Winchester Diocese as Suffragan Bishop of Southampton. Bishop Paul has now become the **Lead Bishop for Education** and Chair of the Church of England’s Education division – The National Society. Paul takes over from Bishop Stephen of Ely, who has held this role for the past number of years. The Bishop of Winchester continues as Lead Bishop for Further and Higher Education.

All of the Department for Education’s coronavirus guidance for educational settings can now be found in one place on GOV.​UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

The DfE have also published guidance on safeguarding in schools and colleges:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

With best wishes

**Jeff**

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Director of Education

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