

12 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities during Covid-19

At this time of ongoing challenge and CV-19 crisis we wanted to make contact with you to express our admiration, thanks and gratitude for all you have done and continue to do in order to meet the current guidance where children and young people should be home educated as part of the government safety measures, if this is the safest option for them. We realise just what a challenge this presents to parents and carers of children, young people and young adults who have Special Educational Needs. Clearly, caring for and providing home education opportunities for a child who has a range of special educational needs is demanding and the longer these measures are in place the more challenging this becomes. This letter is to outline what support you can expect from the service and your school.

We also recognise that the children and young people themselves are having to cope at a time when their usual support and routines have been radically altered.

We are aware that our schools and specialist settings across all age ranges are working hard to ensure that your children are supported and enabled to learn at home as well as, where possible, receive the specialist support and therapies identified within their specialist educational programmes. Our SENCOs too are providing a wide range of support and contact with families. We hope that this regular contact and support has helped.

As a parent/carer of a child or young person who has an EHCP or who is receiving SEN support you should be receiving regular contact from your school on a weekly basis with advice, support and resources to help you support and home educate your child. This should involve some discussion to determine whether your child would benefit more from attending school or remaining within the home for the current time. This may be referred to as a 'risk assessment' which all schools are expected to complete on their vulnerable pupils. Currently the vast majority of families are opting to keep their children at home with a small number accessing part-time placements. We are in weekly contact with all school leaders and SENCOs to monitor this and to share advice and updates as necessary. If you haven't had contact from your child's SENCO or school please contact us at educationenquiries@croydon.gov.uk and we will follow up on this.

If you are a parent/carer of a child or young person who is already supported through our Social Care, Youth Engagement and Children with Disabilities teams, you should be receiving further contact and support depending on the level of need. This ranges from weekly face to face visits for the most vulnerable to fortnightly contact via phone or on-line. Again, schools are working to support these vulnerable children and young people with the key agencies involved and the Virtual School, where appropriate.

The SEN Service is also available to offer help and advice as required. For those of you with EHCPs you will already have a dedicated SEND Coordinator who you can contact. The SEN Service continues to process requests for assessment, annual reviews and transitions during this difficult time but with regard to the amended guidelines which call for best reasonable efforts. The government has temporarily revised the statutory legislation in light of CV-19 and the challenges it presents to SEND activity and has sent a letter to all SEND families outlining these new arrangements. Please see link to the legislation update:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-ehc-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

To maintain key contact and SEND activity, the SEN Service has engaged with some parents through virtual 'Microsoft Teams Meetings'; we hope that parents who have taken part in these meetings have found this helpful. If there are different ways in which parents would like us to have conversations with them, we would be keen to hear feedback about this.

It is so important that we communicate effectively and share concerns at this time. Should you want to make contact please do not hesitate. Such contact can be made either directly with your school, through the SEN Enquiries contact: senenquiries@croydon.gov.uk, directly to your EHCP co-ordinator if your child has an EHCP, or via the general contact: educationenquiries@croydon.gov.uk.

The use of technology to support access to learning has offered some creative approaches and resources to support home learning. In particular we have ensured that a range of useful links is available to you. To this end we have posted advice and links to information and activity packs for children and young people with special educational needs on the Local Offer website. You will also find a SEND Frequently Asked Questions Document that was put together with the help of the SEND Parent Forum. We hope that you find these helpful. The Local Offer can be accessed at: <https://localoffer.croydon.gov.uk>.

Early on during the COVID-19 pandemic response some parents contacted us about wider matters that were affecting their families, such as adequate access to food, in the context of children not receiving meals at school. In these cases families have been sign-posted to the range of family support options and, if and when appropriate, direct contact has been made with social workers on behalf of parents. Please do make contact if you are experiencing any challenges in relation to access to food and we will link you with the right support. Contact can be made through familysupport@croydon.gov.uk.

As you may be aware, the government and DfE are looking at potentially reopening schools and settings within the coming months. We recognise that the uncertainty

around any return may be unsettling to children and young people with SEND, and we want to acknowledge that and help families prepare for it. Please be assured that the support needs of children and young people with special needs and disabilities will be considered as part of the return to their setting and SENCOs will be working with families to help manage this transition with as much notice as possible.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your understanding, commitment and for following government advice to keep us all safe during this period.

Some useful links:

<https://localoffer.croydon.gov.uk/kb5/croydon/directory/home.page>

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

<https://axelscheffler.com/books-for-older-children/coronavirus>

<https://www.learndirect.com/funding-options/free-english-maths>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

<https://www.skillsforlifeframework.com/article/free-online-functional-skills-courses/5533>

<https://www.ncfe.org.uk/functional-skills>

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Henderson".

Robert Henderson
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shelley Davies".

Shelley Davies
Interim Director of Education