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Dear Parents,

I appreciate that we have been filling up your inbox with a huge amount of correspondence and it is always challenging to find the right balance. You should by now have received three letters from Mr Hooper. In these correspondence he has explained how Showbie works as it will be our primary source of distance learning. If you have misplaced those letters then the instructions can be found on our website inside the protected Home Learning page. We are excited about the possibilities this on-line learning platform provides and you will see that the teachers have been working incredibly hard over the Easter holidays to prepare for the upcoming term. I am tremendously grateful for all their efforts.

Expectations: When we learned of the closure of schools our attentions turned quickly to the best format for educating the children from home. There is no question that we are all happiest when the children are in School and benefitting from the excellent teaching and fabulous resources of the Richard Pate School. I understand that many of you are feeling uneasy about the challenges that lie ahead and we want you to know that we understand that every household is different. For some families there may be just one child with all the resources they could possibly need and one, or even two, parents who find they have time to spare because of a change in job circumstances. In other families we know there may be multiple children trying to use the same device and parents who are also trying to juggle work commitments within the home. Our expectations from School is that everyone is going to do the best job they can in their particular situation. The last thing we want is for anyone to find these requirements become overwhelming. If you find yourself in need of IT help e-mail [techsupport@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:techsupport@richardpate.co.uk).

Screen Time: We are all acutely aware that there are inherent dangers with too much screen time and we do the best we can to limit the children's exposure while in School. You must be particularly careful with their exposure during this lockdown period. Our activities have tried to find a mix of on-line and off-line activities. Mr Edwards and Mrs Knight have created some fun and interactive PE activities and these should give an active outlet to the day. We also encourage you to have your children take regular breaks to stretch their legs and find some fresh air.

Key Worker Children: The children of key workers have been coming in to School over the Easter holidays and that provision will continue as we enter the Summer Term. They will be involved with the same activities that children will be doing from home. Once again I wish to recognise the efforts of these parents who are performing key functions in such challenging times. We had as many as 26 and as few as 1 over the closure but anticipate a rise in the average numbers as shift patterns change and certain pressures grow. We will have a small group of teaching assistants and teachers supporting these children and a member of the Senior Leadership Team at School each day.

Trial Period: Showbie is a new platform to us but has been around since 2012 and is based in Canada. We are all learning about it and inevitably we will discover a great deal more as we roll it out this week. There may be issues of download and upload speeds, we may find the volume of traffic causes issues and we will probably find individual peculiarities as the week unfolds. I would ask you to be patient as we all discover the strengths and limitations. The early experiences of children seems to be quite positive and I

am already discovering one of my challenges as I am alerted to every activity that takes place generating separate e-mails. As you can appreciate my inbox has been fairly full already over the past few weeks.

Acceptable Use Policy: You should by now have received a copy of our acceptable use policy. We have asked that you read through this with your child and fill in the slip at the bottom. We would like this returned to the class teacher who will collate that all have been returned. This is to protect your child but also to remind them of their responsibilities. I would like to reinforce the section of uploading onto social media sites any content produced by teachers or children. This is strictly prohibited and I ask for everyone's cooperation in seeing that this does not happen.

Fee Variation: In my previous correspondence I have spoken about our varied fee for the Summer Term. This is to recognise that parents are experiencing real hardship in these challenging times. Many of you have expressed appreciation for this recognition. There has been criticism from others who feel this did not go far enough. To that I will reiterate that fee income covers salaries for the most part and these are largely fixed costs. We have made savings wherever possible and a significant number of staff have been furloughed as well. When you project the varied fee across 299 children the loss of income is significant. We are making every effort to ensure that the School continues to exist in September. I anticipate that many independent schools will not come through this but I am determined to ensure we emerge from this building on all the positives of the recent inspection report and making sure we continue to offer your children the highest quality education possible.

Returning in the Summer Term: Many parents have asked me based on my experience when we are likely to return to school. Not surprisingly my worldwide pandemic experience is limited. There are some quiet expectations that primary and Prep schools might be the first entities to return to normal. We will of course follow government guidelines and ensure that the children's safety and that of my colleagues is paramount in any decision. Rest assured we want to be back as soon as we practically can. I also would love to see our wonderful Year 6 pupils enjoy their final days at Richard Pate where they belong. If events conspire to keep us from Richard Pate throughout this term then I am determined that we give them a chance to come back together for a proper final assembly and an opportunity to perform their wonderful production of Seussical Junior to their parents. We are already looking at some possible summer dates to set aside for this possibility.

Looking at September: I know it seems an eternity away but we are also looking at our plans for September. Over the incredibly busy Spring Term we made four appointments to replace those who are retiring and creating the new Communications and Marketing position. I shall announce these appointments as soon as the final checks are completed. I am really excited by the new additions to the team and know they will help us to take the School positively into our next phase. We continue to be incredibly grateful to Mr Gilvear, Mrs Cooper and Mrs Jones who are working diligently to ensure we provide the very best education through the coming weeks. We will find a way to properly recognise their huge contributions to the school when some level of normality returns.

I conclude by reminding everyone that better times are ahead. Despite the enormous challenges, I am hearing from families that are making the most of this enforced time together. Enjoy your children as much as we do when we are with them. We will all look back on these days as a unique moment of our lives. Our efforts to create a home learning environment are there to help support you during this time not to add an extra level of stress. Please don't compare yourselves to others or worry that you are not doing enough. The most important thing right now is to stay safe so that we can come back together again as a community when it is right to do so.

Yours sincerely,

*Robert MacDonald*

Robert MacDonald

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