

24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

## UPDATED INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FINANCIAL MATTERS

I hope that you and your families are all well. It is a month since our first letter about financial matters, in this update I will try and set out below for you where we currently are in relation to things that impact on finances.

### FREE SCHOOL MEALS

For the first four weeks we sent out vouchers to those families entitled to Free School Meals, either a physical voucher, or via email. As of this Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, we moved over to the Government provision with a company called Edenred. The electronic vouchers for this week are now active and you should have received an email. Please check your junk box if you haven't seen anything yet, and let me know if nothing arrives. Those parents who needed a physical voucher, should have received that from me in the post. I can only apologise for any delays this week but please be assured we are doing everything we can to get these to you in a timely manner.

If your circumstances have changed and you would like to see whether you are eligible for Free School Meals, please access the online application via the link below. Please email me if you have made an application for that we know to look out for information to tell us if you are approved.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-transport-and-free-school-meals/apply-for-free-school-meals/>

### TRIPS AND VISITS

#### Cancelled trips

**Ski trip** – we know that we have 20% of the trip costs being repaid by the tour operator, the remaining 80% is being claimed back on our insurance. The claim forms have gone in to our insurers. As with most organisations at the moment, they are working under pressure, but we are hoping to have an update from them very soon.

**New York** – the tour operator has now refunded us the costs in full. This has today gone to ParentPay so that they can credit our account and make the refund facility for the trip active. I would anticipate that refunds should be with you via ParentPay by the end of next



week. At that point you will get an email from the ParentPay system to tell you your refund is there for you to claim back to you bank.

**Cheltenham Science Festival** – As with the New York trip, the money has been sent to ParentPay, and the information relating to New York is the same for the Science Festival.

**World Challenge** – the company will be in touch with parents directly about refunds as this is not managed by the school.

**Year 8 end of term residential** – This trip was cancelled yesterday. We are therefore now in the process of reviewing payments received. Once that has been done, the money will be sent to ParentPay in order for us to be able to activate the refunds to you. This will take two or three weeks.

### All Other Trips

D of E trips due between now and May half term have been postponed until October, Miss Coote has written to parents separately about this.

Year 12 3 Peaks Challenge – Yorkshire in March and Wales in May have been cancelled. We need to review these trips as a whole, the decision on the Lakes trip in June still has to be finalised. Once the decision has been made for that trip and we have been able to finalise the expenditure against income for these trips we will update you.

We are still making decisions with providers about Year 7 and Year 10 end of term residential trips, and Year 11 Prom, I expect to be able to update you on these when I write next.

We are still assuming currently that trips books for September and onwards will be able to go ahead, so please carry on making payments for those trips until we tell you otherwise.

We are still mindful of the need to make sure we follow process carefully so that any cancellations are done at the right time to ensure that insurance covers us if we have paid for things already and need to claim money back in order to refund you. We don't yet know at what point school will be able to reopen and trips resume. We therefore don't want to cancel anything until we are absolutely sure that it can't go ahead. If your trip is paused or postponed, we will be clear with you about the financial implications at that point.

To reiterate, as each trip is reviewed and decisions are made, we will communicate the outcome to you along with any updates about payments still to be made or refunds for any payments you have made already.

### **BUS PAYMENTS**

First and foremost, thank you to parents on buses from Swindon and Wiltshire for your patience whilst we try to work our way through the guidance available to us regarding this.

I have been working with the bus company to ensure that we do not compromise our contract, or their ability to re-mobilise when we are told that school is reopening, whilst also minimising the financial burden on parents.

This is the current position:

- Please **DO NOT pay your May instalment** (unless you know that you have arrears you are clearing, or you are a critical worker and are still using the service). This payment is sent from your bank, so you need to cancel the Standing Order your end.
- We are negotiating costs with the bus company and whilst I am not yet in a position to give you exact figures because we need to take this month by month, we will only be paying 50% of the contract costs for April, and each month that we continue to be closed. This is based on a saving in salary and fuel costs, but maintaining capital costs to the company relating to the bus fleet associated with our contract.
- We may be able to reclaim more costs, I am still looking into this through various avenues.
- Until we know how many months we will be closed for, I cannot give an exact figure on individual refunds, it is unlikely that we will be able agree refund figures until our return date is actually known.

Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to ensure we claim as much back as we can. As I stated before, the bus and coach industry is a difficult and costly industry to be part of, and if we lose the contract we have with our current provider, renegotiating a new one for September after the current crisis could be very costly. Pulham's have a proven track record and I am thankful that we have a good working relationship with them.

I hope this this update is helpful. I will aim to write again in a few weeks time to give you our position at that time.

Kinds regards

*Sue Dorey*

Sue Dorey  
Business Lead

[sdorey@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:sdorey@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk)

