

## **Music Service Letter to Parents – 05.06.2020**

*With regret, and our sincere apologies, Music Service digital lessons for the summer term are going to end in the current format at the end of Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This is so we can adapt again to the further re-opening of schools with everything due to change for everyone once again. We hugely apologise for the short notice and inconvenience this will cause and once again ask for your support and understanding.*

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

Since mid-March, education has been through unprecedented change. The Music Service has adapted to ensure we have been able to carry on providing digital lessons at home for those families that have wished to participate. We have been delighted by the remarkable take up and positivity shown by our families and pupils to this very new and different way of learning. For some pupils this has meant we have taught without missing any sessions and kept nearly 2,000 children making music. We are hugely grateful to our schools and families for working with us in this way.

Digital learning has been possible while most pupils have been at home, so teachers have been able to schedule convenient lessons for families across the week. The further opening of schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June has been managed mostly with rearranged lessons, where needed, for the year groups now attending schools.

We are now looking ahead to next year and working closely with headteachers on what will be possible and when. What is clear at this point is that there may be continued disruption to normal school operations, and many are looking for increased flexibility in how we can bring music back to schools safely in September.

This leaves us with a difficult decision to make as we need to give flexibility to our schools, information to parents about next year and security for our teachers so the Music Service can continue to operate effectively through 2020/21.

We have decided the best approach to take is to ask our team to stop teaching from Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June so they can join the national Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (known as 'furlough'). Ideally, we would want to continue our digital teaching for the remaining sessions of this term. However, due to the changes in government legislation, this is not possible as the 10<sup>th</sup> June this is the cut-off date for employees to join the scheme before it closes to new entries.

Additional changes to the scheme mean that we will have the flexibility to provide music lessons as they are required from September, making sure the Music Service is best placed to support schools in making an effective start to the new school year. We will need to be creative and dynamic in our approach to assessing the need from families and schools and flexibility is a key part of this. Our offer relies on support from our schools so we must work with them on how they see the next few months and their offer to you.

If you have received lessons this week, I'm very sorry that your teachers haven't discussed this with you. Until a final decision had been made, we didn't want speculation to cause confusion. We have asked teachers to send messages with a more personal follow up and any information they feel you may need.

### **What does this mean for our pupils and families now?**

#### **Teaching:**

Regretfully, it means that we will not be able to carry on with our weekly digital lessons after Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June. Teaching will continue Monday 8<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> as normal. Teachers can take queries or questions from parents on a voluntary basis but can't provide usual teaching services until they return from 'furlough'.

**Parental Contributions:**

All schools have a different approach to funding their music provision.

We will be working with every school in turn to offer credits for the coming weeks, which we were due to deliver and now won't be able to. Schools may decide to offer the option to take this as a credit towards future lesson charges (or may be able to pass on any refunds depending on their charges and policy).

We'll be talking further with schools about these options over the coming weeks and reviewing how best to start lessons again in the Autumn Term. We know schools are very busy, but many would also find it helpful to know which pupils intend to continue learning from September.

**Activities:**

Please keep and use all music service instruments and resources over the weeks ahead to keep children playing. We are retaining a core team to answer questions and queries that come to our central inbox [musicservice@entrust-ed.co.uk](mailto:musicservice@entrust-ed.co.uk)

We will be adding to our bank of lesson videos and resources on social media and our YouTube channel. Search for 'Entrust' on YouTube or 'Entrust Music Service Staffordshire' on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**Future Learning:**

The government is due to issue full guidance on the changes to the 'furlough' scheme on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. Once this is released, we will update our schools and families and are hopeful we will be able to explore digital 'keeping in touch' sessions throughout the summer holidays or from September in addition to normal lessons. We intend to have a clearer plan and offer by the end of June when we should know a great deal more about wider school opening, the summer months and the finer details of the 'furlough' scheme.

I realise that this may come as a surprise and disappointment for families and pupils, as it does for us. Our key purpose is to provide quality music education and we have been proud to adapt to the challenge of the weeks since March. We ask for your understanding as these unprecedented times continue. I hope the weeks of learning we have been able to provide since March have been helpful and valued but that you can also understand our need to look ahead to next year and how we will be best prepared to enable music lessons to continue in and out of school.

We will be sending this update to schools, so they are aware of these developments and we will be in touch with you again once we have a clearer picture on restarting services.

If you have any questions or concerns, or need further support with music-making for the weeks ahead, then please contact us at [musicservice@entrust-ed.co.uk](mailto:musicservice@entrust-ed.co.uk)

Sincere thanks again for your support and understanding.

Best wishes for the weeks ahead,



John Callister – Head of Service