

Food Bank Donor update - October 2020

As an academy trust with nine schools across the Taunton and Chard areas we care passionately about our children and their families. We know that their academic achievement is really important but we know that if they are not physically and emotionally well, they cannot learn. So when lockdown happened in March and we were unable to have all of our children in school we set about thinking about what we could do to support them and their families during this unprecedented and uncertain time.



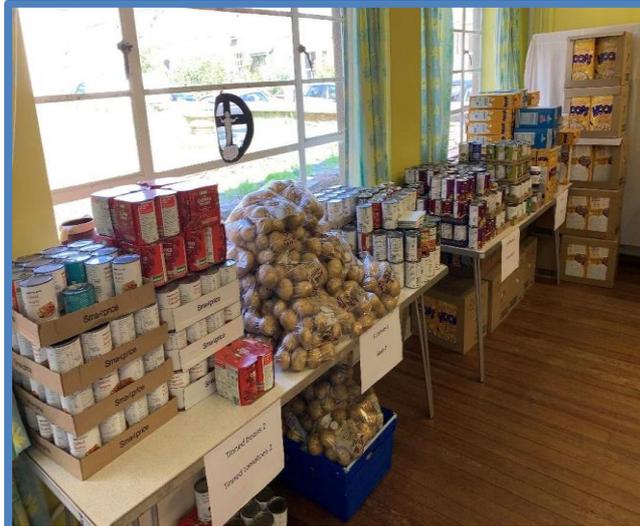
We knew that academically we could support their learning. It is after all our strength. Teachers worked tirelessly to develop lessons on Google classroom and also to provide hard copy packs of learning where children did not have the technology necessary to access on-line learning. For many of us the idea that there is not a computer, a laptop or even broadband in the house might seem an anathema but for many of our children this is indeed the reality.

Smartphones, often pay as you go, can only support learning to a certain extent and if there are more than two children in a house, many of our families have three, four or five children in households, all trying to access learning from a smartphone, this does not work. Therefore teachers hand delivered learning to many families on a weekly basis.

However, our greatest concern was how our children and their families were going to have sufficient food at home during lockdown. Hence the foodbank was born. We spoke about this on a Thursday and by the Monday the Crowdfunding site was created and money began to come in. We were amazed and delighted in equal measure.

The generosity of parents, staff, the wider community and people who had no connection with the schools or Trust was heart-warming. We submitted bids and were so incredibly grateful to Somerset Community Foundation, Tesco, National Lottery Community Fund and Cooper Associates for allocating funding to our venture. A member of staff at one of our schools pledged to run 100km during June to raise funds for us. Thank you to Mr MacFarlane and his supporters.





Then the work began. We wrote to parents to see who would welcome a food box and we searched for volunteers from our Trust. We didn't ask parents to apply and we didn't check. We simply asked if they would like a food box. At a time of significant stress, the last thing we wanted was parents feeling ashamed or embarrassed. We made no fuss. We just delivered a food box.

The following week we had created an enormous shopping list, contacted Asda for a shopping slot and away we went. We shopped on a Monday, packed on a Wednesday and delivered on a Thursday. The volunteers were amazing. Week after week they simply turned up. We worked with The Lord's Larder in Chard who were just fabulous in making this happen for our South Somerset families.



The response we have had from our parents, our children and their families throughout this food bank venture has been amazing. The gratitude from our parents has been sincere and tears have been frequent. Tears of relief and thankfulness.

Saying thank you to our contributors and donors always feels inadequate. As a result of your generosity we were able to deliver between 80 and 90 food boxes every week. We fed over 270 children and their families during these weeks. The difference that this has made to our children is immeasurable.

So however small this word is, we would just like to say a heartfelt ...

THANK YOU

