

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you can imagine, this has been a very surreal week at school. We are preparing to close for the foreseeable future and would like to thank you for the many kind words and offers of support we have received. We may yet contact you to take you up on your offers.

We all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The government has given clear guidance that self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing are imperative.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of the virus is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. That is why the government has asked for parents to keep their children at home, **wherever possible**, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who **absolutely need to attend**. The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

This is not a statutory requirement- schools are being asked to help as part of a concerted response in this national emergency.

This is a very different type of provision from what schools usually provide for these pupils, it will be about care and keeping them safe to allow key workers, (such as NHS hospital staff), to go to work and care for the sick or to keep other emergency services running. Schools that provide care will be free to determine what the provision looks like and what they deem to be best for the pupils they are supporting. It will **not** be formal education.

It is important to reiterate that we will need to make individual decisions about whether it is safe to open the schools from now onwards. It remains the case that if the schools do not have enough staff to care for the pupils safely (even based on the new 'reduced provision' approach) then, subject to risk assessment and consultation with the chair of governors, a full or partial closure may be necessary. We will have to keep the decision under daily review.

Overnight the government has published a list of key workers:

- Health and Social Care
- Education and Child care
- Key Public Service Workers
- Local and National Government
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services
- Social workers
- Firefighters
- Teachers
- Teaching assistants

Many thanks for the swift response to our email requesting information about whether you believe this applies to you. We do however, have to bear in mind that schools have been closed to reduce social contact between people as a preventative measure to fight the virus. To have too many children and adults in the building in these circumstances defeats the purpose of the closure and so there must

be a limit on numbers of places offered. (The Education Minister had indicated yesterday that they had anticipated this to be about 10% of our school roll.)

With this in mind, we will therefore be making decisions today about who will initially be offered places at school so that we can plan for Monday. Children where both parents are key workers (or where a single parent family is a key worker) and children who we have identified as vulnerable will have the top priority and we will contact you today by email or phone. If you have not heard from us by 4.30pm today please assume that we do not have a place for your child at this time. We will then review this as time goes on so that if capacity allows us to we can offer places to more children. **Please do not automatically assume that you have a place because you replied to our email.**

Where both/single parents are key workers, children should only be brought into school when parents are working and we need advance notice of this so we are able to plan appropriate staffing levels. We also need evidence of keyworker status (e.g. ID Card/letter from employer on headed note paper) plus an indication of working patterns so we can plan appropriately. If you are unable to provide this please email the school for further advice.

We will communicate further with families who have identified themselves to arrange which sessions are required. Those children will not be required to wear school uniform. If they are entitled to free school meals this provision remains unchanged. If you are not entitled to these, and you wish your child to have a hot meal, they will be able to order them on the day at a cost of £2.30. The menu for next week will be restricted to the main meal and vegetarian option on the menu.

For those of you who have your children at home, we will be planning other activities and trialling some different software to enable distance learning. We need to train the teachers first how to use it so this will not be available until after the Easter holidays.

For those in receipt of Income based Free School Meals, (not the Universal Free Meals for Foundation and Key Stage 1 children), we are awaiting further information about how we can provide you with vouchers for local supermarkets which the Government are organising.

Government advice is that parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.

It also states that parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.

Let us hope that this unprecedented period does not last long and that we all make it safely to the other side. Please look after yourselves and each other. Whilst the advice is to physically isolate, our parents are important to us so please do not be afraid to seek help or support should you need it. We have a wonderful school and village community and I am sure if you are struggling there will be help at hand.

Take care, keep safe, keep up to date with the Government advice,

With very best wishes,

Anne Hawkins