

14th January 2021

Critical childcare during school closure (for 25th Jan – 12th Feb)

I do hope that you and your children are all well and managing to keep safe. At this moment in time, we know that the school will continue to be closed until at least February half-term. Whilst the school is closed we will continue with our remote learning provision to provide home learning and activities to engage, interest and motivate pupils. As mentioned in a previous letter, I know how challenging the current situation is for everyone, so I would remind you to just do what you can, try and keep a routine and exploit any learning opportunities.

Although the school is closed, it is providing critical childcare for those that desperately need it. This is for parents who are critical workers in the response to Covid 19 (and EU transition) - who do not work from home or have childcare at home. **Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home - every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.** It is essential that together we all play our part to protect ourselves, those around us, protect the NHS and save lives. That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, **unless absolutely necessary**, to stop the virus spreading.

In planning our provision for the next three weeks (25th Jan – 12th Feb), we request that if you would like us to consider your child for critical childcare during this period, that you complete the questionnaire attached to this e-mail.

However, before doing so – please consider the following points:

- Compared to the previous school closure, we have close to five times the amount of pupils in school. This is clearly a concern in terms of Covid transmission. Despite the stringent hygiene measures that are in place, it is near impossible to keep pupils at a safe distance from each other and, in the case of the younger classes, from the staff.
- School is nowhere near as safe as the children's homes.
- The latest Government guidance says that parents and carers who are critical workers should only send their children into school if they are not working at home.
- We will require evidence to verify your critical worker status.

To keep the numbers to a safe level, we are asking critical workers to think very carefully before requesting a place. If you are working from home or able to get childcare at home, then your children must be at home. We appreciate that this may be difficult and the work you do is critical to the Covid response, however, if we find ourselves at capacity we will prioritise places based on the following tiered system:

- Vulnerable pupils - a Child protection Plan, Looked After Children, children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and children with a Child in Need Plan.
- Both parents (or single parent household) are critical frontline key workers and are not working from home.
- One parent is a critical frontline key worker and the other is not a critical frontline worker – neither are working from home.

Once we have received your application, we will inform you on Tuesday 19th January of the provision that we are able to offer. It is important to note that once we have carefully considered your application, the following may happen:

- We will be able to offer all the days that you requested
- We will be able to offer some of the days you requested
- We will be unable to offer you any of the days requested
- We may put your child on a waiting list
- We may also seek further clarification about you critical worker status and place of work.

Please note that if you currently have children receiving critical childcare at school this will not automatically guarantee that we will be able to offer the same provision that they are presently receiving. Therefore, please only apply for days that you absolutely can't keep your children at home.

Apologies for the tone of this letter – I am simply trying to do my best to minimise risk and keep as many people safe as possible. Ideally, I want to accommodate every child, but unfortunately in light of the raised Covid threat this is simply not possible.

I would once again like to thank all the critical workers for everything that they are doing and the risks that they are putting themselves and families in. This includes my staff who are still coming in to school to provide critical childcare. The staff and I are extremely appreciative of all the positive feedback and kind messages that we have received – it is wonderful to be part of such a supportive school community.

Yours sincerely

Mr D Barron
Headteacher