

5th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you with details of our plans for the period of school closure announced yesterday by the government. The extremely short notice given to schools and families has presented numerous problems which we have tried to solve to the best of our ability and which are explained below.

Pupils in School

Schools have been asked to provide places for pupils considered vulnerable and for children of key workers, with vulnerable pupils being prioritised in the first instance. At the same time, we need to provide high quality, remote learning and pastoral support for those pupils who remain at home. This requires a delicate balancing act in terms of staff allocation, particularly since we need to reduce class sizes in school in the interests of safety, and it is very important that parents work with us to ensure numbers in school are at a level where we can deploy sufficient staff to deliver home learning, where school is as safe as possible for pupils and staff and where we are able to accommodate places for our most vulnerable children as well as those of key workers.

It hasn't helped that the government's latest criteria for key worker status is incredibly broad – it may have been easier for me to ask parents to indicate if they do not have key worker status! But, joking aside, it is important to consider that key worker places are intended for those families who have no adult at home able to supervise their children and who are immediately required to work in response to the pandemic. At present, our projected numbers are such that, in order to ensure we can provide for our most vulnerable pupils, we may need to introduce a priority system for key workers. I would prefer not to have to do this and would politely ask key worker parents to review whether they have any capacity for keeping their child/ren at home. If this is the case, please advise us as soon as possible so we can manage our numbers more effectively. Please also refer to the accompanying letter from Richard Sheriff.

My intention is to contact all key worker parents and those of vulnerable pupils as soon as possible this afternoon to offer a place. Please note that we would prefer all pupils who are offered a place, to attend fulltime where possible and appropriate – i.e. 5 full days per week. This is mainly for safeguarding reasons so that we know exactly who we are expecting each day. Exceptions may be some vulnerable pupils who may struggle with this (the Junction team will discuss this with individual parents) and key workers where a parent only works on particular days.

If your shift pattern is the same each week (e.g. Monday, Tuesday and Friday) we can just have your child in on these days if this is a fixed pattern. However, if you work a constantly shifting pattern of days, it would be easier for us to have your child in 5 full days. Please contact your child's phase leader via their phase email address to inform them of any such details. It is important to understand that this is not childcare and that it will significantly disrupt your child's education if you pick and choose the days he or she is in school for no particular reason.



Phase leaders will send out detailed information later today around issues such as start and finish times, which entrances to use and which classrooms children should report to.

Nursery

The government has given primary schools which offer nursery provision, the discretion to decide whether or not to open. We have made the decision this morning, in common with other schools in the Trust who offer nursery provision, to only offer places to those nursery pupils who are deemed vulnerable or who have parents who are key workers. This decision has been made with the support of the Red Kite Learning Trust and has been made in the interests of safety.

Lunches

For children who will be attending school, we will be providing a hot school lunch as usual for those children who would normally have one. Children who normally bring a packed lunch should continue to do so. If your child usually brings a packed lunch but you would prefer her/him to have a hot dinner, please contact the school office to make arrangements.

For children who are not in school and who qualify for benefits-related free school meals, we will be using the voucher scheme to accommodate this and will be in touch with parents before the end of the week to explain how this will work. Vouchers will be 'back-dated' to the start of this week.

Breakfast and After School Club and Kids at Heart (Kids' Club)

Unfortunately, we will not be offering our usual before and after school provision at this time as numbers simply do not make it viable. I have spoken with Julie Shaw at Kids at Heart and they have decided not to open this week but to review numbers on Friday and then let parents know if they will be opening for vulnerable and key worker pupils from Monday 11th January.

Pupils at Home

As during the previous school closure, parents will receive detailed information from their child's phase leader relating to the remote learning plan each week. This will include a timetable and the agreed protocols for attending live zoom lessons. The expectation is that all pupils attend these lessons each day. There will of course be times when, for a variety of reasons such as poor health, your child has to miss a lesson. It would be very helpful if parents could communicate with their child's teacher to let them know if this is the case. The Emotion and Wellbeing team will be on hand throughout the closure period to offer support to pupils and families in need. Further detail relating to this will be sent home shortly.

Other issues

We are still awaiting guidance on a number of issues such as class sizes and how we accommodate Preparation, Planning and Assessment time (PPA) for staff in school. The outcomes of both of these matters may have some impact on how we structure classes in school and the timings of at least one of the days each week. We will communicate with you as soon as we have answers to these questions.

Thank you all for your patience and understanding. I know that no one wants a lockdown and a school closure and that these are extremely difficult times. I would like to assure you that we will do everything we can to minimise the impact of these events on your children and will continue to offer the best possible education and care.

Kind regards,

Tim Broad

Headteacher

