

Love, Learn, Live



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Friday 20th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Firstly, I hope that you are all keeping well. Secondly, I would like to thank the many parents and carers who stopped and spoke to staff or sent emails to thank us for all that we are trying to do during this very difficult time.

I am sure that like all of us at school, you will have seen the latest government plans regarding the closing of schools and the changes relating to key workers that was announced late last night. New government guidance is now saying that only **one parent** needs to be a key worker to be eligible for emergency childcare in school. The list of who is classified as a key worker was also provided. This list is extensive and I am writing to urge parents to be sensible during this time and only use this childcare service as a very last resort.

Please read the extracts at the bottom of this letter.

We need to ensure that we try to keep to the guidance about social distancing as much as possible and parents and carers need to understand that if too many children use the childcare service, in the long term, it will not be operational. All parents, even key workers, need to consider all options of childcare before resorting to use the school childcare service.

We need to be fair to those parents and carers and community members who are working on the frontline. They need their children and their families to stay fit and healthy and if parents use the service unnecessarily, we are putting some key people at risk, as well as the staff who will be operating the childcare facility within school.

You will be receiving a letter and survey link from Kate Brunt, our MAT CEO providing additional information and next steps as part of the Rivers MAT plan shortly. Some of you will need to complete the online survey for the first time, due to the Government changes as you may now qualify, and some of you will need to complete it again to ensure we have the correct information. Please do this as soon as possible today. **Only complete the survey if childcare is needed in school.**

We will be contacting parents and carers who have completed the second survey and who qualify to confirm that they will be admitted in to school on Monday. I will also be contacting parents and carers who have applied but whom we think do not qualify today to ascertain additional information. If you have submitted a survey form and no longer need the service, please let us know as soon as possible.

This service will only work if parents are honest and fair. We also appreciate that whilst some key workers will not need the service now, they may do further down the line and we will be flexible with this. Please keep in touch via the office email.

I would like to make clear the following points:

- This will be a childcare service; the children will not be educated in school as they normally are.
- School uniform, school shoes and a coat as normal.
- No food will be provided during the day. If your child is attending breakfast club/afterschool club from 7.30am through to 6pm, then they will need to have had breakfast or bring it in with them. They will also need to bring snacks, a packed lunch and a light tea. Please understand that our catering service is one of the services in school that we will not be able to operate from Monday.
- Parents of pupils of FSM will be eligible for food vouchers. A separate letter relating to this will be sent out.
- Please note that key workers who are using the before and after school service will still be charged.

Finally, thank you for working with us during this exceptionally hard time. I hope that you all take care and keep well.

Best wishes

Mrs Pierpoint

Head teacher

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Government advice:

'As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. That is why the government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing. And the most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 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 parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But 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.

Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- 1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.*
- 2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.*
- 3. 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.*
- 4. 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.*
- 5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.*

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed in the link below, and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision:

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