

Friday 20th March 2020

Dear Parents/carers

Thank you for your support at this unusual time. I have been sent a template letter which gives parents additional information.

Key workers & vulnerable children

Overnight, the government has published its latest guidance on the categories of students that schools may stay open for from next week. That advice can be found here:

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

Vulnerable students

The advice is similar to our expectations. We have contacted directly all those families that we believe are affected and asked them whether they need to attend or key worker staff have registered with us online. **It is important to remember that where a student is at risk because of an underlying health condition, we do not expect them to attend.**

Key workers

The definition of a 'key worker' is wider than was originally set out by the government. It now includes those working in healthcare, education, key public services, local/national government, food industries, public safety and security, transport, utilities, communication and financial services.

The guidance is very clear about the starting point:

'If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.'

Schools are closing in order that social contact is as limited as it can be. The guidance goes on to say:

'...schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.'

We would ask you to recognise that the more children that come into school, the greater the risks. That includes to the staff who have to attend to supervise.

The following questions should help to determine whether you need to ask the school for your child to come in:

1. Are you a 'key worker' as defined by the government advice?

Please check the definitions in the government advice following the link above.

2. If yes, have you confirmed with your employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, your specific role is necessary?

Not every role will be essential to continue. Please confirm this as a matter of urgency with your employer. There may be circumstances where individuals are essential only for certain days or parts of the week.

3. If you are still required to go to work, can your child be left safely at home?

For most of our older children, they will be in a position to take care of themselves and look after younger siblings. It is important that they are safe to do so. Checking in frequently with them is one way of managing this.

4. Is there someone else who can safely look after the children?

The starting point will be a partner who does not work in a key worker category. There may be others who can safely support your children. Please note the government advice, '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.'

5. If you still need your child to attend school, can this be limited to specific days or times?

Some parents have already confirmed that they only require their child to be looked after for a limited time/number of days. This is very helpful as it helps to reduce the amount of social contact.

6. If you still need your child to attend, are you able to transport your child to school?

Somerset County Council will aim to provide a bus service on Monday next week. After that, we should be telling them what transport we require so that we limit the number of bus drivers that need to come out.

Having read the above, if you still require your child to come to school then please email jane.rosser@highhamprimary.co.uk (please note this email account is only for this purpose).

If you could do so by 2pm on Saturday 21st March 2020 that would significantly help our planning for next week. Even though you may have already filled in the online form or spoken to Mrs Edwards, please could I ask you to check the new criteria and **in light of the latest government information, we will now assume that you will keep your child at home unless you email to book a place** (please state which days/times if you normally work part-time and therefore do not require full time cover).

Please be aware that we will be managing the capacity of the school staff as well, many of whom are now self-isolating or staying away for health reasons. We believe that we can manage the demand that is likely, but the late posting of the government criteria does make it difficult for us to be certain how things will work out. However, we all appreciate that the picture is forever changing.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jane Rosser

Headteacher