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Dear Parents and Carers

20th March 2020

Yesterday, I spoke to many of you about whether you thought your child/ children might be in the 'priority' group of children that the government has asked that schools remain open for. We now have further clarity and I have summarised this for you below.

The government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and has asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

This includes vulnerable children, children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, children on Child in Need Plans, Child Protection Plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those children with an EHCP.

This is an offer to parents/ carers and there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not wish to do so.

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.

We are therefore asked to 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.

Critical workers include NHS staff, police, farmers, and food retail workers and those included in the full list of critical workers that can be used by clicking on this link;

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

Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the government can send their children to school if required.

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

Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

This includes childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services

This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response, or delivering essential public services, such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms-length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security

This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If workers think they fall within the critical categories above, they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the government can send their children to school if required.

If you now think your child will be at school from next week, please let us know as soon as possible, by calling school or leaving a message on the school answerphone. We can accommodate children of workers within the critical categories above, to suit shift work in terms of having children on particular days. Again, please let us now as soon as you are able to.

Chestnut Class Residential

I have discussed with most parents/ carers that unfortunately the residential to CYE is cancelled. We have been looking into how money is refunded, but having to go through insurance companies means that this will not be an instant process. We appreciate that the current coronavirus crisis has a huge financial effect on many people. If a delay in refunding your money will cause you serious financial hardship in the coming weeks, please call me at school and we will try our best to support you. Otherwise, we will update you as soon as we are able to.

Entitlement to free school meals

If your child is entitled to free school meals, we will be contacting you directly on Monday 23rd March 2020, after further clarification from the local authority.

Home Learning

As previously communicated, we are ready to make live the 'Learning from Home' tab on our website to support the children with learning at home. This will be accessible from Monday. There will be no log-ins required, just click on the tab from the home page of our school website. This will be added to and I will look at ways in which we may decide to set up further ways to support, depending on news of how long schools might be closed for. We imagine that this is a process that will evolve as time goes on.

Lastly thank you for your patience whilst the guidance is understandably a little unclear at this time.

Best wishes

Lucy Cooper
Headteacher