

28th January 2021

Children of Critical Workers and vulnerable children

School response to requests for school places during school closure due to coronavirus.

Firstly, can I thank all our parents who have continued to work so hard at home with their children to keep them engaged in their learning. You all deserve medals for your patience and perseverance!

Following the government's announcement yesterday that schools will not be re-opening before 8th March, I am anticipating further requests from parents for places in school for their children on the grounds of critical worker or vulnerability of children. We have now reached capacity in terms of numbers of children we can safely accommodate in each of the year group bubbles and would only consider accepting more children into school in very exceptional circumstances.

The government guidance states that only children of critical workers and vulnerable children should attend, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.

Critical Workers

Critical workers are workers whose work is critical to the coronavirus and EU transition response including those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. These sectors 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 pupils

Pupils who have been assessed as being vulnerable at St. Mary's include children with an EHCP, children who are 'looked after' and children who are considered to be 'children in need' or under child protection by social services.

The school also considers vulnerable pupils to be children who are at significant risk of falling further behind in their work or suffering from poor mental health as a result of home circumstances and/or having limited or no access to remote learning.

The school's position

Everyone who works at St. Mary's Primary School wants the school to open fully to all pupils as soon as it is safe to do so. We will be guided by the government who are, we understand, guided by the scientists to tell us when this time is right and currently the government have said that the earliest this could safely happen will be March 8th. In the meantime we have to do our best to manage both remote and onsite education.

We know how much the children want to be back at school with their friends participating in all the opportunities school offers. We must keep reminding the children that this won't go on forever and soon they will be back in school with their friends and teachers.

We understand that educating your children at home is very challenging when you are working and even if you are not working. Many of you are finding the situation extremely stressful. You have our



absolute sympathy and we are keen to help parents who are finding it difficult. We would stress that parents give themselves and their children some slack when home schooling becomes too tough. That is the time to take a break, go out for a walk or have some quiet playtime, reading, listening to music or colouring until everyone feels calmer. Employers are encouraged to be flexible during this time – taking into consideration the pressures workers are under when they have children at home.

If we can keep the pupil numbers down at school, we can reduce the spread of the virus and do our bit to prevent the health service from becoming overwhelmed. For our school community, this pandemic began a year ago and I have been so appreciative of the letters of support and the collective spirit that our community has shown over the last 12 months. We have come this far working together to keep our families and children safe. With the health service under the pressure it currently is, now is not the time to fill up classrooms when children can be educated at home.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Woolley

Headteacher