

Date: 24/03/20

Dear Parents and Carers,

It's an understatement to say these are challenging times; I send my best wishes to you and your families in these very difficult circumstances.

What does the Education Secretary say?



Gavin Williamson @GavinWilliamson · 6h

You should only send your child to school on Monday if you have to, because your work is critical to our COVID-19 response.

If you are able to keep your child at home, you should.

[#StayHomeSaveLives](#)



Here is further guidance on what the school is able to provide for those children whose parents are 'critical workers' and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Government guidance:

- 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 children of critical workers and vulnerable children **where they can**.
- 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, and all childcare providers, 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**

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

Why isn't the school putting something in place for every single student with an EHCP?

Because, in summary, we are following government's detailed guidance

- Most of our children can be safely cared for at home
- this is the best way to slow the spread of the virus and keep families safe
- the number of available staff is falling weekly
- the fewer children in school, the lower the risk of infection spreading

There have been some contradictions in the government guidance, as it includes children with an EHCP in its list of vulnerable children, but then acknowledges that most are far safer at home with you than travelling to and mixing in school with other children and adults. The scientific advice makes it very clear that every additional person in school increases the risk of infection to your child, your family, my staff and their families. That is why this provision is limited at this point to those children that cannot be kept safely at home, or if keeping them at home would hinder the fight against the virus.

How can the school reduce the risk of infection?

I have a duty of care to your children and to my staff that I take very seriously. The Leadership Team and I are doing all that we can to minimise the risk of infection travelling via your school to your family and the families of our staff. The best way to do this is to reduce the number of people in the building to the minimum necessary each day. There will still be a risk, but we will have reduced it significantly. I am moved by my staff's willingness to help in this emergency, but there are increasingly few of them available due to illness, household self-isolation or enforced isolation due to underlying medical conditions.

What will the school be able to provide?

In announcing these emergency measures the government has not had time to suspend legislation around school attendance, EHCP or curriculum provision. It has, however made it clear that schools will not be providing normal lessons. There will be supervised activities supported by a range of staff based on their availability rather than specialised teaching in classes. For the next two weeks these activities will run for usual school opening times, subject to review. There will be no after school clubs.

Will the school continue to send work home?

We intend to keep making work available via the school website, though this will be work to keep children practising their skills rather than new learning. School staff will ring you later this week to see how things are going.

What about the Easter Holidays?

Clearly the fight against the virus will not stop when the school term stops. We are awaiting further guidance on how we might support key workers during the Easter holidays. At the moment the above will run up until Friday April 3rd and will resume on Tuesday April 21st.

Keeping in touch with you and your child

As mentioned above, your child's form tutor will be in touch with you this week to see how they are getting on. If you have any questions or worries, please raise them during the phone call. We may not have an immediate answer but will do our best to find out.

If the form tutor is unwell, then a different member of staff will call you. We are asking staff to call from home rather than come into school, so watch out for a call from a private/ withheld number! Staff will not hold onto any contact details, and any paper records will be shredded in school once the emergency is over.

When will schools re-open as normal?

That is very hard to say, I'm afraid, but it looks like months rather than weeks. I also know that every parent in the country is worrying about the effect on their child of not being in school, including me. It will be much harder for parents of children with special needs, especially where their child is upset by unexpected changes of routine. We will stay in touch with you and your child every week and make sure that they have activities set that they can access at home.

I can only promise that when we do properly re-open as a school, every member of the staff and the multi-disciplinary team will be ready to kick-start into meeting your child's needs, interests and ambitions.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in this time of National Emergency.

With my best wishes to you and your family.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kevin McDonnell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'K' and 'M'.

Kevin McDonnell
Headteacher

