



Headteacher: Mr. Neil McKellar-Turner

Thursday 14 January 2021

## Critical Workers Update

Dear Parent/ Carer,

As you will be aware from the media, most schools have seen a large rise in the number of children attending school, under the critical worker definition, during this lockdown compared to last March.

This is mainly as a result of ineffective guidance and direction from the Department for Education. However, the reasoning behind trying to reduce the number of pupils in attendance at school is based on the need to **reduce the overall number of social contacts in the community**; by limiting the number of pupils in school, there is less risk of the virus spreading between households.

Although the critical worker list from the DfE is quite broad, **we are concerned that our numbers are fast becoming too high for us to safely manage**. We have risk assessed that it would not be safe to have more than 20 pupils to a classroom (last time we had a maximum of 10). If we increase this, we will be near to usual class sizes which would go against the government guidance. Pressure has been put on the Education Secretary from schools, teaching unions and local authorities to support a reduction in the number of pupils attending school. As a result of this, the department revised its guidance on critical workers last week, stating that: *'Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, **but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.***

We completely understand the difficulties and pressures being placed on all our families at this time as you, again, try to juggle work, child care and remote learning. We have also resisted any deviation away from the national guidance in order to be as fair and transparent with you as possible. For example, the Local Authority is advising schools, where numbers are high, to only award places to pupils where both parents are critical workers. So far, we have not taken this approach. However, with most hubs now at capacity and an ever-increasing waiting list, we need to kindly ask you to review two key points if your child is currently attending school:

- **Is your role critical to the Covid-19 response (your industry may be listed in the guidance but is your specific role critical to the pandemic response?) and are you unable to work from home?**
- **Are both parents (or the main carer in the case of single parent families) working away from the home and you have no other childcare arrangements?**

If the answers to both questions is 'yes', then your child should be attending school under the critical worker definition and we want to be able to provide spaces for this to be the case.

If the answer is 'no' to either one of the questions, then we are asking you to **review whether or not your child should have a space in school or that you may be able to reduce the overall number of days on which your child attends.**

We are aware that this is a worrying and unsettled time for everyone and we certainly do not want to cause any more pressure. However, we are concerned that there are children whose parents are critical workers but their child cannot be given a school place due to our current numbers. This is a situation we wish to avoid.

If you feel that you need, or are able, to make a change to the days on which your child is currently attending school, please email the school office as soon as possible to inform us of this.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours faithfully,



Neil McKellar-Turner  
Headteacher