



20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

School Closure: Key Workers and School Provision

Following on from my letter yesterday outlining the school's provision for the pupils of key workers after the school closes later today, I finally received guidance from the government at midnight last night. As I am sure you can imagine, the delay in receiving this information has caused a great deal of uncertainty for the school and its staff, as I am sure it has for many of you.

The purpose of the enforced closures is to drastically reduce the numbers of children and adults coming together to try and curb the spread of infection during this national crisis. **Therefore, even if your child is eligible to attend the provision we will be offering, I would urge all parents to only use this option if absolutely necessary. If children can be cared for at home during this time, they should be.**

"...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 those children who absolutely need to attend.**" Gov.uk*

In the letter sent out yesterday, I made a best guess as to what might constitute a key worker. The government has now provided that list and I have copied it at the end of this letter for your information. Although the initial reports suggested that both parents needed to come into this category, the guidance now states that if only one parent is a key worker, they can be **considered** for school provision.

We want to ensure as small a number of pupils are present in school next week for reasons already established and therefore places will be offered on a priority basis as follows:

1. Vulnerable pupils: those with a named social worker and/or an EHCP
2. Pupils where both parents are key workers or in the case of a single parent family, that person is a key worker
3. Pupils where one parent is a key worker

For those of you who have already expressed a need for your child(ren) to be in school next week, I will be in touch before the end of the day to confirm arrangements or seek clarification on some aspect of your request.

If you have not yet requested a place, you will need to contact me **before the end of today** at consult@whitehill.herts.sch.uk so that I can plan for Monday and ensure I have sufficient staff to cover the provision.



If your child is offered a place, it is worth noting the following:

- On site provision will not be formal school; children will not be having formal lessons or teaching
- Pupils will be supervised by a small team of staff which will vary from day to day
- Usual school hours will apply and therefore pupils should not be in school before 8.35am and should come straight into school via the main door where they will be signed in
- Pupils do not need to wear school uniform other than a school uniform top (sweatshirt / polo shirt)
- Pupils should bring their 'home-learning packs' which may be used for part of the day
- For those who currently have school dinners, Herts Catering will continue to provide a school meal, alternatively pupils can bring a packed lunch
- At the end of the day, pupils will be released via the pupil entrance at the side of the school (between the upper and lower playgrounds).

Whilst we will endeavour to offer this provision for pupils, please note that a total school closure may still be necessary if I do not have sufficient staff available (due to sickness or self-isolation). Should this occur, the local authority may be able to help with sourcing a place at another setting.

Please be aware that total school closures to **all** pupils cannot be ruled out if government directives change.

Children who are eligible for benefit-related free school meals but who are being cared for at home will be entitled to receive some assistance during this period of school closure. This may be in the form of shopping tokens or similar. I will be in touch when we know more about how this will work in practice.

These are certainly unprecedented times and I am aware may be very upsetting for many people – adults and children. The burden of a school closure is going to be an additional source of anxiety. As I know you understand, this is the same for my staff team who are equally concerned about the safety of their own families. Thank you for your understanding whilst we all navigate this new way of working. I can assure you we are all doing the best we can to help the national effort at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Mills
Headteacher



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 nursery 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.

