

## SOMERSET EDUCATION SERVICES

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**HEADTEACHER: NICOLA ROBERTS**

20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents/carers

### **Key workers & vulnerable children**

I am sad to be writing this letter in such difficult times but I need to inform you that the school will be CLOSED from Monday.

Overnight, the government has published its latest guidance on the categories of students that schools may stay open for from next week. That advice 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>

Please could I encourage you to read the Government document above rather than press interpretations so that you can clearly see if you fall into the categories and need to be considered for childcare.

### **Vulnerable students**

The advice is similar to our expectations. We will be contacting directly all those families that we believe are affected and ask them whether they need to attend. It is important to remember that where a student is at risk because of an underlying health condition, we do not expect them to attend.

### **Key workers**

The definition of a 'key worker' is wider than was originally set out by the government. It now includes those working in healthcare, education, key public services, local/national government, food industries, public safety and security, transport, utilities, communication and financial services.

The guidance is very clear about the starting point:

**'If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.'**

Schools are closing in order that social contact is as limited as it can be. The guidance goes on to say:

**'...schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.'**

We would ask you to recognise that the more children that come into school, the greater the risks. That includes to the staff who have to attend to supervise.

The following questions should help to determine whether you need to ask the school for your child to come in:

**1. Are you a 'key worker' as defined by the government advice?**

Please check the definitions in the government advice following the link above.

**2. If yes, have you confirmed with your employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, your specific role is necessary?**

Not every role will be essential to continue. Please confirm this as a matter of urgency with your employer. There may be circumstances where individuals are essential only for certain days or parts of the week.

**3. *Is there someone else who can safely look after the children?***

The starting point will be a partner who does not work in a key worker category or is not at work due to shifts or is working from home. There may be others who can safely support your children. Please note the government advice, '*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. *If you still need your child to receive child care at school, can this be limited to specific days or times?***

Some parents have already confirmed that they only require their child to be looked after for a limited time/number of days. This is very helpful as it helps to reduce the amount of social contact. Please indicate this on the Key worker form.

Having read the above, if you are still unable to provide suitable care at home, which is the preferential action to take then please complete the attached Key Worker Form. If you could do so by 2pm today (Friday 20<sup>th</sup>) that would significantly help our planning for next week. If you have already emailed in, please could I ask you to check the new criteria. **If you have not completed the questionnaire we cannot consider your child for a place.**

**Lessons will not take place. Pupils will be able to access and quietly complete the 'work from home' set by the teacher, in the presence of a support staff member. Teachers will be preparing and marking work for their classes.**

We will send a confirmation invitation to all those requests that we are able to support. Please be aware that we will be managing the capacity of the school staff as well, many of whom are now self-isolating or staying away for health reasons. For the purposes of Monday (23<sup>rd</sup>), only send your child to school if you have received one of these invitations.

We believe that we can manage the demand that is likely, but the late posting of the government criteria do make it difficult for us to be certain for Monday until we have heard from everyone.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Roberts  
Headteacher