

23 March 2020

Children continuing to attend school (vulnerable and key worker children)

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to update you about Coronavirus and the most recent guidance our schools have received about the virus and how to keep all pupils safe. The situation is developing constantly and Government advice is being updated / changed regularly and often at short notice.

If your child is eligible to continue attending school from Monday 23rd March, we would like to share the following information with you.

Government guidance on numbers of vulnerable and key worker children continuing to attend school

We would like to remind parents that schools have now closed as educational providers. Schools are continuing to remain open as childcare providers to those parents in key worker groups or for those children identified as 'vulnerable'.

Government guidance states:

"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 you would like to read the whole article this guidance is from please click the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

The Government is also keen to emphasise:

"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."

Managing the numbers of vulnerable and key worker children in schools

- Indicative numbers across our schools suggest that our schools are expecting significantly more children than the recommended 10%.
- Whilst we are committed to supporting the Government's strategy and keeping schools open for a limited number of children, we cannot ensure the health and well-being of our staff or maintain the principles of social distancing within our schools, if we have large numbers of children continuing to come to school.
- Over the next few weeks we expect the numbers of staff in our schools to decrease as more start to self-isolate or become ill themselves.



Prioritising which children will be able to access the in-school provision

We will assess the numbers of children attending each school and, where numbers are unmanageable, we will prioritise which children can come to school. The priority categories for continued provision are:

1. ***Vulnerable children with a linked social worker or EHC Plan***
2. ***Families with both parents/carers as key workers (as per list on website)***
3. ***Other vulnerable children (as identified by the school)***
4. ***Families with one key worker parent/carer***

I hope that you will understand that we have limited resources available and a duty of care to protect our staff and that decisions we may have to take around prioritising children will not be taken lightly. Each school will introduce the priority ranking system, when they need to, based on individual school staffing levels and the demand for the places. Schools will remain open as long as our staffing ratios allow. Changes to our provision may change at short notice, as we cannot predict our future staffing levels.

Arrangements for Monday

- On Monday, the teachers will share a suggested timetable with the children so that they will have an idea of what their general day will include. We will endeavour to try our utmost to maintain a daily routine for our children as much as we possibly can.
- On Monday, we will also send home a weekly overview for parents to record which days of the week they require childcare at school, as some parents have already informed us they do not require childcare every day. This will also include which days you may require your child to have a school dinner or a packed lunch.

Breakfast and Afterschool Provision:

We are currently unable to continue offering breakfast club. School starts at 8:55am and finishes at 3:15pm.

Please be assured that school staff are working very hard and in very difficult circumstances to maintain normality for our children and community. Therefore, I would very much appreciate your patience and perseverance during these uncertain times.

Yours sincerely



James McGeachie
CEO, Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT



Kerry O'Neill
Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic Academy





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Dear Parents and Carers,

Please see the attached letter from James McGeachie and myself which clearly outlines the emergency provision we will be giving in school from today. Among other things, it describes the measures we may be forced to take should the number of children accessing the provision become unmanageable.

This is an unprecedented and difficult time for us all and, here at St Mary's we are keen to do our bit to ensure those parents who are critical to the management of the Covid-19 crisis are enabled to get to work. Therefore I am asking you to please help me to protect the children and staff by understanding that this is an emergency childcare provision only. It is not an option for children to dip in and out of and if children can be safely cared for at home, this is what **must** happen. The whole point of school closure is to reduce the spread of transmission, therefore we must support only the minimum number of children, so we can deploy the minimum number of staff and expose the minimum number of people to risk.

Thank you for your understanding and please be assured of our daily thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Ms K O'Neill



