

20 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

**Ref: Emergency Support for Children of Key Workers in Primary School**

On Thursday 19 March, the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland, Peter Weir MLA, made a statement outlining how schools will close from the end of the school day today (Friday), however, will open with skeleton staff on Monday 23 March to support identified Key Workers. Provision of any level of service will be dependent on staff availability and the school may have to be closed if this becomes a problem.

Please be aware that schools have received very little guidance, training, support or resources and are now being expected to provide care for children as the virus spreads. We have no access to, nor have we been provided with protective clothing or medical advice. Up until this point we have been happy to plan and work to help children, but now feel vulnerable and have grave concerns about the safety of staff and their families, pupils and the wider school community. We want you to consider the message in this letter seriously before making a decision to apply for a place.

Before contacting school, please pay particular attention to the following points. Schools will not be able to operate a “normal” school day and will be offering a childminding type service through this period. Many of our schools are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time.

Points to consider:

* Only children with parents working as key workers (see list of key workers on separate sheet) should consider attending school.
* Alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child to school eg with other family members, friends etc. SCHOOLS SHOULD BE USED AS A LAST RESORT. This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance.
* Children in families identified in vulnerable groups should **NOT** attend. You must also consider if a child in your family is vulnerable you should not send siblings because of the risk of carrying the virus.
* You must be in an emergency situation where no family members, eg husband, wife, partner, older children, extended family members, friends cannot support.
* If you work part time you must only use the service for the hours you need.
* If you are able to work from home to accommodate this situation, please do so.
* If you are able to take your children to work with you, you should do so to reduce the number of children on site.
* As we are not trained medical staff we cannot guarantee the safety of your child in relation to contracting the virus if you choose to send them in to school.

We have been asked to communicate to parents that any decision to send a child to school **must** be based on trust and we appeal to parents not to abuse the service to further promote the spread of the virus and put staff and other children at risk.

If could potentially be impossible to accept the number of families who may apply for provision, given the extensive nature of the Minister’s keyworker list and it will be up to the school to prioritise places.

If it is agreed that your child is attending, you must observe the following:

* Children attending will not be required to wear school uniform.
* Please be advised that schools will be performing childcare duties that will be carried out by all members of staff.
* Children in Year 1-3 will attend 9 am – 2pm and Year 4-7 from 9 am – 3 pm.
* Bring a lunch and snacks with them as we have yet to secure/organise lunch provision – we will inform you if we get this organised.
* Children must bring their home learning packs with them.
* Children will be following social distancing advice and will sit at least one metre away from others. They will have outside time, but not playing in close proximity to each other.

We would ask that you pay attention to all the points outlined above before applying to send your child to school. Please also remember PHA advice must be followed at all times and children/families must follow all self-isolation advice. Schools will also follow PHA advice should anyone display symptoms or take unwell during attendance.

If you are a key worker and you meet the criteria and wish to avail of this reduced provision please contact the school via the email address below before 12 noon on Saturday 21 March:

acunningham798@c2kni.net

Your email should outline how each of the parents fulfil the criteria of a “key worker” and the days which you will need the child care provision.

***Please note that we cannot offer any guarantees that your child will not become infected as a direct result of you sending your child to school within this new school system. If advice changes over the weekend we will update you.***

Yours faithfully

A Cunningham

Executive Principal

List of Key Workers as outlined in information to schools on Thursday 19 March 2020

**EVERY CHILD WHO CAN BE SAFELY CARED FOR AT HOME SHOULD BE**. There is no requirement for key workers to take up this offer or send their children to school if they do not require this service. Schools should in effect be a **LAST RESORT**.

Please work with us to ensure schools operate with a limited number of children and staff.

**Health and Social Care**. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector.

**Education and Childcare**. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response.

**Public Safety and National Security**. This includes civilians and officers in the police (includling key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, Prison Service and other national security roles.

**Transport**. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response.

**Utilites and Communication**. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal.

**Food and Other Necessary Goods**. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (eg. Hygiene, medical etc.)

Other workers essential to delivery key public services.

Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.



**REPLY SLIP**

If you would like to apply for emergency support for your child at school, please complete the following and return via email to: acunningham798@c2kni.net by 12 noon on Saturday 21 March.

Name(s) of Primary School Child/Children:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Class(es)

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Reason for application (please detail key worker role or roles where both parents are key workers):

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Please indicate days supervision may be required:

Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday / Friday

Signature: …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Emergency Contact Number: …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

***Please note the school will only be able to provide this service providing there is a safe staffing level to do so or until otherwise notified by the Authorities. In the event of the school being unable to provide the above service due to staff absences, you will be notified as soon as possible.***