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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
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Thursday 19th March 2020

Urgent - Update about school closure from 23.03.20 and information needed.

Dear Parents/Carers

In response to the announcement from the government yesterday evening, I can confirm that our school will close for most children at the end of the day tomorrow. In line with direction from the government we will remain open for children of key workers. The length of these measures are unknown to us yet and clearly we will communicate with you, in the usual ways, once there are any updates.

We are committed to doing all we can so I can confirm we are aiming to be open during the Easter holidays for children of key workers. However there will be a number of factors we will need to consider over the next couple of weeks before I can confirm this will definitely be the case.

At the time of writing this letter (2.45pm) we have not yet received confirmation from the government about the definition of 'key workers'. I am not saying this to complain or 'pass the buck' – clearly the government will have many things to work through. I am just stating this as a fact. My understanding is that we will receive more information around 5.00pm today (we find this news out at the same time as you). I considered waiting until tomorrow to try to gather information from you but feel this would be too late as we need an indication of potential pupil numbers from next week, to start making plans in school for next week.

It is very important you make every effort to return the attached form to school tomorrow morning – paper copy or via email if this is easier for you. If we don't receive a reply from you we will assume you do not think your child/ren will be at school from next week.

Thank you for your patience at this time. This situation is as frustrating for us as it is for you but we need to just work through these things and we will get there!

Suggested home learning activities will be added to the class pages on our school website tomorrow. Staff will be sending homework books and occasionally some other exercise books for children to work in. If there is anyone who doesn't have access to the internet at home please speak to class teachers at the end of the day so they can look to support you in a different way. Teachers will be sharing their email addresses so you can contact them during the time we are not fully open.

A reminder that school is open for all children tomorrow and we hope you send your children in if there are no reasons for them to be off, eg ill health or a need to self isolate. I am sure they would enjoy another 'normal' day and would find this reassuring.

I will write again tomorrow with further updates.

Many thanks

Mrs Helen Sutherland

Head Teacher

Please refer to the details below when completing the form.

I must emphasise that, at the point of writing, the details below might be subject to some change following an update from the government later today.

Announcement by government on Wednesday 18th March 2020

Schools will only be open from 23.03.20 for the following children:

1. Children whose parents are **key workers** and who **don't have any alternative child care**.
2. Children who have **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)** for their special educational needs (SEND)
Please be aware this is only for children with the highest level of SEND.
3. Children who **might be considered vulnerable**, for example where a social worker is involved.

Our current understanding of the definition of 'key workers' is:

- Medical professionals including doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics and other health workers employed in a medical/health setting
- Community safety – police force and fire brigade
- Care workers
- Social workers
- Education – teachers and other staff working in a school or a pre-school setting
- Staff working in child care providers
- Supermarket workers
- Delivery drivers (in some circumstances)
- Anyone working in 'critical infrastructure', eg such as gas and electricity

I appreciate you might have personal views about this list and what should and shouldn't be on it. However, this is the list we are using for now and we will amend it, if necessary tomorrow, following any updates from the government.

If you fit into a category above but there is another parent at home who could look after your children our advice is to keep them at home. The whole point of this measure is to reduce social contact so the spread of further transmission of the virus is minimised – in that sense it is not about entitlement to child care but about ensuring we, as a school play our part in enabling key workers to get to work.

