



St. Philip's
RC Primary School

5th January 2021

Dear Families,

Firstly, thank you for your understanding today, as you know from previous experience, I would never close a school fully unless it was completely necessary.

Late last night and throughout today, we have been establishing our key worker lists and have been in contact with many of you. In this letter, I want to share with you the challenges we have faced and the difficult decisions that have to be taken. The approach outlined within this letter has followed discussions with staff and governors. It will not be satisfactory to many of you, no approach will.

In March, no more than 6/7 children regularly accessed 'Key Worker' provision in school. Today, the number of vulnerable pupils and those of key workers is closer to 200! We are entering a period of national lockdown where the message is:

STAY AT HOME, CONTROL THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS, SAVE LIVES

National rates of infection and deaths linked to Covid are now in excess of those seen in March and April. Opening the school to large numbers of children does little to help reduce the spread of the virus and keeps the risk to all staff very high. We have a duty to limit the spread of infection within our school, whilst supporting our children in their learning. Our plan must therefore be fair and sustainable moving forward.

Because the number of pupils who have a parent as a key worker is beyond the numbers that will allow for the safe social distancing of pupils, and therefore exceeds the new restricted net capacity of the school, we have no option but to prioritise attendance for:

- 1. Vulnerable Pupils**
- 2. Those children where both parents are key workers**

In some year groups, we may be able to provide for children where only one parent is a key worker. However, despite requests, we have/are continuing to be inundated with phone calls, which is restricting our ability to check our information carefully. School will therefore only reopen tomorrow (6th Jan) for the children listed above and this will be confirmed by text message this evening. Nursery will remain closed tomorrow. Please do not ring school and **do not send your child in unless you have received a text confirmation.**

Each child allocated a key worker place will be placed in their year group bubble with their teacher (or the parallel year group teacher). The rest of this year group will have access to their teacher (or parallel teacher) to support them remotely in their learning. They will be available at every point throughout the day and will be in communication with the children at all times. All children in school and at home will follow the same timetable and complete a full curriculum. I am confident that this is the best solution, and will ensure that children who are unable to attend school will get the high quality support that they deserve. I know how challenging it is for families to support home learning whilst working from home themselves. However, these are the sacrifices that we must make to save lives.

What happens next?

If you do not receive a confirmation text later this evening, do not send your child to school tomorrow. This is not an ideal way to communicate, but the quickest way to get messages to families.

If your child is able to return, they need to come to school at the normal staggered time and make their way to class. The class teacher will be there to greet them.

If your child is unable to return to school, work will be posted on their Google Classroom (Y1-Y6) or Tapestry (Nur/Rec) for the next 3 days.

Week Beginning 11th January

Your child will be invited to join a new Google Classroom for their full year group. Parents will be given direct access to their child's class teacher. Planning for the week ahead will be posted on the classroom, as well as times/codes for the virtual meetings, which will be taking place. A teacher will be available from 8:45am – 3:00pm to support home learning. There will be one afternoon per week where children will need to work independently, so that staff can have preparation time.

An overview of our approach to home learning will be shared with you. This will show the level of support which will be available to you and your child throughout the wider closure of the school. I am determined that a full curriculum offer will be made available to all our children and that the impact of this latest lockdown is minimised.

I am anticipating that many parents will be disappointed that their child is unable to return to school. However, I hope you will pause and consider the reasons I have given and the wider implications that opening the school more widely would have. If every school continued to welcome two hundred children back into the building, this lockdown is only going to be prolonged and the impact on children will be even more damaging. This solution is clearly not ideal, but is the least damaging and most practical from a very poor list of alternative options. We enjoyed such a fantastic autumn term and should remember this fondly. Things will improve more quickly if we all make the sacrifices, which are needed.

If you wish to contact me regarding these decisions over the coming days, I would be grateful if you could do so through stphilips.rcprimaryschool@salford.gov.uk. The allocation of places will be kept under constant review, but I apologise in advance if I am unable to meet parental demand.

Thank you all for your support and your kind words at this time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Barrett', is displayed on a light grey rectangular background.

Mr. J. Barrett

Headteacher