

IMPORTANT INFORMATION. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY IN FULL

Dear Parents/Carers

Firstly, many thanks for all of the messages of support and appreciation that have been sent into the school staff and leadership team at this time. We do really appreciate your support.

Allocation of Places in School

We have had a number of queries about the criteria for allocating places in school. I wish to emphasise that we are following the guidance which is very clear and which was reinforced by the Local Authority yesterday. Where **ONE** parent/carer is a critical worker their child should be offered a place in school **if required**. (We only requested that both parents/carers were critical workers for the emergency childcare provided on Tuesday.) In addition, places are offered to children who fall into a number of vulnerable categories. Some children may, for example, have additional needs which are not immediately obvious and which are quite rightly confidential. Parents/carers should not be made to feel guilty because their child qualifies for a place under the current circumstances or pressurised into explaining why they have been allocated a place. The critical worker list has been compiled to ensure essential services that we all rely on can continue.

Critical Workers

If you are a critical worker and informed us of this, you should have already been allocated a place for your child/ren. If this is not the case and you need a place, please contact school as soon as possible.

We are, however, in the situation of having a very high proportion of families who fall into the critical worker category and have been inundated with requests for places which we are now struggling to accommodate. 50% of our children are currently allocated places. The whole point of the stay at home order is to reduce contacts as far as possible we are very conscious that our school and West Bridgford Junior School we could end up with almost full classes in some cases. This would seem contrary to the whole point of the lockdown which is to try and keep children, staff and families as safe as possible and reduce transmission of the virus. We are trying to keep interactions in school to a minimum. We are really happy to have children in school, but if you can keep your child at home over this time because there is another adult at home, then home is the safest place for your child.

We have therefore asked those families allocated places to let us know if they do not really need a place, because for example one parent is fortunate enough not to have to work. (Though I must emphasise as previously stated that they are entitled to use that place under the guidance.) Indeed, several families have already declined places or are only using places when absolutely necessary. We have also checked parent/carers' critical worker status very thoroughly against the Government list and have asked for evidence of critical worker status. We have refused some places where occupations are not listed.

We had originally offered places to critical workers five days each week to reduce the impact of change on the children and the number of different contacts occurring. However, we have listened to the concerns of parents who have indicated that they would feel safer keeping their child at home on days they do not work. We are therefore sending out a questionnaire today asking you to indicate the days you will actually need a place at school. This will also aid us greatly in reducing contacts and therefore the transmission of the virus, given the high number of critical worker children that have been allocated places at school. We know that none of this is ideal and we are all

being put in difficult situations but we need everyone to work together to keep our community as safe as possible and to keep numbers of people interacting to a minimum.

Whilst providing face to face teaching for the children of critical workers we also need to provide a good home learning package and support so that all of our children get the best that we can provide at this time. The children in school and at home are following the same weekly plans. To support those learning at home our teachers need time to prepare, record, upload, assess and respond to this on line, alongside teaching the children in school. This is challenging given that all our teachers are currently required to teach the children in school. Please be aware that as in the first lockdown every school has different circumstances. Some will have large numbers of staff with very few children in school and therefore able to offer very different home learning experiences.

Supporting Parent/Carers with Home Learning

I am so sorry that so many of you have unexpectedly found yourselves having to support your child with home learning. I do understand that some of you will be finding it very challenging to juggle home learning and working from home and that you may feel the criteria are unfair. This is on top of the anxiety you may be feeling about Covid-19 in general and the normal stresses of family life. Yesterday and today we have had to focus our time on the logistics of which children we could allocate places to. The Teachers have also provided some interim home learning for this week. After today we are turning our attention to how we can best support families with home learning. As previously mentioned this is challenging when all our staff are required to teach the children in school. However, we are determined to try and make the experiences of children in school and at home as equitable as possible within the constraints we are faced with. We have also used the learning and feedback from parents/carers during the first lockdown to inform our planning. We will be contacting you again outlining what you can expect over the coming weeks. I am particularly aware that for our Foundation Stage children this may be the first time their parents/carers have had to support them with home learning so we will be providing top tips on how to help things go as smoothly as possible.

A few parents have contacted us regarding uploading work – We have had some technical issues with uploading work on Microsoft Teams and are working to resolve this. Don't worry about uploading work at present. We will send guidance shortly.

We ask that parents/carers are sensitive to the fact that we all have very different circumstances and pressures right now. Please consider your messaging on WhatsApp and other social media carefully.

We are all in this together though we are not all having the same experience. It is only by being supportive of each other that we will minimise the impact of the various stresses families are facing right now.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and for bearing with us as we once again navigate our way through this new challenge.

Kind regards



Fiona Stevens

Head Teacher