

Benhurst Primary School

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Friday 20th March 2020

School Closure Information

Dear Parents and Carers,

Just after midnight today, we received the official guidance from the Department for Education regarding the closure of schools, childcare and other educational settings. It is very important that we share the information as we were given and ask you read this and apply the guidelines to your family situation with care and deep thought. Where information below is in italics, it is taken directly from the DfE guidance.

The key principles are as follows:

- *If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.*
- *If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.*
- *Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.*
- *Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.*

What age groups does this cover?

The changes cover children at registered childcare providers (including nurseries and childminders), primary and secondary schools and further education colleges.

Will it be mandatory for all schools, colleges and registered childcare providers to remain open in some form?

We are asking schools, colleges, nurseries, childminders and other registered childcare settings to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children where they can. We understand that some may be unable to do so especially if they are experiencing severe staff shortages. We will work with local areas to use neighbouring schools, colleges and childcare providers to continue to support vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

How long will schools and colleges be closed for?

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, schools, colleges and childcare providers will be closed to the majority of pupils until further notice.



I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child - can you guarantee that my child will attend their usual school or childcare provider?

We are expecting the majority of settings to stay open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children so they can continue to attend their usual provider, but we acknowledge this will be impossible for some - such as small rural schools.

Where a setting is unable to stay open, we will work with the local educational authority, regional school commissioners and neighbouring providers to find an alternative setting for their pupils.

Will I be counted as a critical worker?

Critical workers include NHS staff, police, farmers and food retail workers, who need to be able to go out to work.

In order to continue to offer critical services as part of the country's ongoing response to the virus, children of workers who form a central part of effort - such as NHS workers, police and delivery drivers - will also continue to attend school, college or childcare provider.

The link below is to the DfE guidance on who should be considered a key worker. Please follow this guidance carefully and responsibly.

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

If only one parent or carer is a critical worker, can I send my children in to school?

Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the government can send their children to school if required.

I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child but I don't want to send my child in to school or childcare, do I have to?

Many parents working in these critical sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

This is an offer to parents and carers and there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so.

For vulnerable children, your child's social worker will work with you to assess the best option for your child.

Is my child counted as vulnerable?

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Children who have a social worker include children in need, children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. We will work with schools, early years, FE providers and local authorities to help identify the children who most need support at this time.

We know that schools will also want to look to support other children who are vulnerable where they are able to do so.

What will happen with free school meals for those not in school and colleges?

We know that free school meals are important for many families. To make sure eligible children can continue to be supported, we will give schools and colleges the flexibility to provide meals or vouchers to children eligible for free school meals. They will be reimbursed by the Department. As soon as possible, we will put in place a national voucher system.

What will happen to exams?

Primary assessments, including SATs, and exams including GCSEs, AS levels and A levels will not go ahead this summer. We are working with the sector and Ofqual to ensure young people get the qualifications they need. Further details will be provided shortly.



In order for us to plan ahead of next week, we need to know how many children will be attending school. Please remember, the government guidance clearly states 'if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.' You will need to make the decision with the information I have shared. I know many of you will want to speak with me and seek my guidance on your decision. Ordinarily, I would offer this and work with you on an individual basis. However, today I must work on key plans that ensure we are able to offer a childcare service.

Our offer to those families who have a critical worker and need childcare

- We intend to keep school open from 8-50 until 3-30 from Monday to Friday (term time) for as long as required (subject to sufficient staffing)
- We are likely to have a KS1 and KS2 class/es. The timetable will vary but we intend to include a daily PE session, outdoor learning and lots of interesting project based activities. The children should continue to wear school uniform.
Reception/KS1 children will come into school and be released from the end of the KS2 corridor (the current Year 2 entrance and by the outside table tennis tables)
KS2 children will come into school and be released from 5D.
- ABACUS will be open next week as normal (subject to sufficient staffing). This may be extended but we will be reviewed next week. If you would like to use ABACUS and have not used them before, please contact Kayleigh (07903 708764).
- School dinners will be provided as usual.
- Tarkan will run a sports club over the Easter holidays for families who have a critical worker and need childcare. Attached with this letter is a flyer with the key information.

Please follow the link below and complete the questionnaire if you are a critical worker and require childcare. This must be completed by Saturday 21st March at 3-00.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZxLG752oNHXORyFUoZIkxBruWqAR_rsZ79a3bKCOA4A3HAA/viewform?usp=sf_link

These are challenging and uncertain times for us all, and as a school we have tried to offer childcare arrangements that will support our key workers. I realise the changes to our school will cause significant disruption to many families but we have been given clear guidance which we must follow.

On a personal note, can I sincerely thank the many of you who have sent me your best wishes following my family bereavement on Tuesday evening. This has been an incredibly challenging week but my family at home and Benhurst family have given me the strength and support that I very much needed.

Thank you for your continued support, take care and please email me if I can help in any way.
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Yours sincerely,



Mr D Denchfield
Head Teacher