

Commissioning, Inclusion and Learning Services

Inclusion and Learning Service

People Services Portfolio

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20th March 2020

Dear parents and carers

RE: School closures

As you will know the government has taken the decision to close schools from the end of today (Friday 20th March). The government has now published further guidance about how schools will continue to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

The guidance makes clear that our priority, as a country, is to do everything that we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that **schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children**. But the **fewer children making the journey to school**, and the fewer children in educational settings, the **lower the risk that the virus can spread** and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children:

- children who are vulnerable
- children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Vulnerable Children

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Parents who are critical to the Covid-19 Response

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. **If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response**, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed on the next page, **and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision.**

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

Please, therefore, follow these key principles that the government has set out:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

We anticipate that our Sheffield schools will be open to support the children and young people that need to come on Monday.

If arrangements need to change in the days and weeks that follow, for example because there are not enough school staff to remain open, your school will keep you informed.

We are extremely proud of our Sheffield schools who have made such magnificent efforts to support our children and young people during this difficult time.

Sheffield City Council, the local NHS providers, and the government are grateful for the work of teachers and workers in educational settings for continuing to provide for the children of the other critical workers of our country. It is an essential part of our national effort to combat this disease.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Jones', enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Andrew Jones
Assistant Director - Inclusion and Learning Service, Sheffield City Council

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Key Worker Guidance

Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services

This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms-length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security

This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.