

4 January 2021

Dear Parents / Carers

You will be aware that the government has announced tonight that schools will be closed to all except key worker and vulnerable children from tomorrow. I heard this news at exactly the same time that you did and I hope that you will recognise how difficult it is to implement a central decision like this, in a large school, with no notice. I am therefore asking for your support over these next few days to ensure that we have the correct group of children in school and that we gradually move to a system of enhanced remote learning that supports all other families.

Although many of you have contacted us following my request for information about critical workers today, we are not in a position to confirm these places by 8.30 am tomorrow morning. I therefore issue a heartfelt plea that any children of key workers that attend school tomorrow, only attend because parents have no other option for childcare at such short notice. This will allow us the time to contact all other critical workers and to establish groups and staffing from this point on.

If you are a key worker and you do not bring your child in tomorrow, this does not mean that we won't take your child from Wednesday. It simply means that you are allowing your school the planning time that it so desperately needs and are playing your part in securing the trust that we need at this point in time.

I know that tonight's announcement will mean that many of you will once again be feeling the sadness that you felt at the end of the summer term when children and families were desperate to be back in school, but the situation that we are in now is very different to the situation that we were in then. We have a new variant of the virus and cases are rising rapidly. This is not the time to try to secure a school place if you do not need one as this will mean that those that really do need places may be denied and that the level of risk in school increases. This in turn has a knock on effect to longer term sustainability and I cannot stress enough how much we all need to play our part in doing the 'right' thing until we are once again in a much more stable place.

You will see over the next few days that our remote learning offer will look very different this time and we will be working tirelessly to ensure that we look for solutions to any barriers that families experienced last time. I will send further information over the next few days but please rest assured that we will be doing our absolute best to learn from our 'trial run' in the spring and to keep home and school even more strongly connected.

A small group of us will be at the end of the office phones from 7.00 am tomorrow and I ask that you only contact us before school if you have an urgent enquiry about a key worker place for tomorrow. All other questions and confirmation about places from Wednesday onwards can then happen after 9.00 am.

We will be expecting the children of genuine critical workers who have no other childcare options in school tomorrow.

We will also be making contact with as many of our vulnerable children as we can to confirm places but please bear with us if this results in a slightly later start to school tomorrow. Again, if you need an urgent conversation please call the school office before 9.00 am.

I don't think there can possibly be one person in our community tonight that has not felt the weight of this announcement or the anxiety that it will inevitably bring and my thoughts are with you. The determination that I and the Damers team have to make this next chapter work for our community remains unwavering though and I hope that with patience and trust we can work together to establish a new model of working from tomorrow. This will not happen instantly but I can assure you that it will be worth the wait provided that we are allowed the time to plan and communicate tomorrow.

I will be in touch regularly over the next few days and I hope that you recognise how much I share your sadness tonight.

With warm wishes

Catherine Smith
Headteacher



Brave, unique, caring and kind.