

Dear Parents and Carers

6th January 2021

First of all, I apologise for the number of communications emanating from myself over the last few days. However, I am sure that you all appreciate that the situation is a fluid one and positions will change as we progress through this pandemic.

School Places for Children of Critical Workers

On Monday 4th January, the Government announced the closure of all schools in England with the exception of an provision of school places for pupils who are vulnerable, and who are the children of 'critical workers'. Key points in relation to the Government's directive on emergency care provision for eligible pupils are very clear:

- 'If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.
- 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.
- 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 school places for a limited number of children.
- Many parents who are 'critical workers' may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.
- 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.'

Our academies are in full support of the Government's strategy in relation to Covid-19 to provide the necessary provision of school places for vulnerable pupils and children of 'critical workers'. However, you will appreciate the duty of care that is in place for the health & safety of all pupils and staff, and as such we must ensure that we have the absolute minimum number of pupils attending an academy site in order to lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

It is also hugely important that we try our very best to ensure that we can provide high quality opportunities for remote learning for the majority of pupils that are learning from home; this is inhibited when the proportion of pupils on site is significantly above that which is intended by the Government guidance.

I must therefore ask all parents to be understanding of the situation, and not to place an un-necessary burden on our limited resources, potentially placing pupils and staff at greater risk and reducing the capacity to deliver high quality remote learning.

Please, only pursue emergency care provision if:

- You meet the eligibility criteria as a 'critical worker'.
- There is absolutely no other alternative for your children to be cared for at home, or remain at home safely i.e. there are no other adults who are at home, or who can work from home as is now being actively encouraged nationally.
- As a 'critical worker', you only seek emergency care provision during the period when you are at your place of work and no other adults are at home
- Your child meets the criteria for a vulnerable child and it is requested by school that they attend.

In conclusion, this is clearly a very difficult time for pupils, parents/carers and everyone working within education. Ultimately however, our collective aim remains the same: to ensure that young people get the best possible continuity in their education within the safest possible environment. With this in mind could I ask that you consider all of the above and only apply for emergency provision as a very last resort?

Thank you for your continued understanding and support, and please take care and stay safe.

Yours Sincerely



Mr D Dickinson OBE
CEO
Waterton Academy Trust