

Lanchester E.P. (Cont.) Primary School & Nursery

A Caring Community Where All Can Flourish



Tuesday 5th January 2021

Dear Parents,

Here we go again! I am so sorry for the barrage of communication at the moment but hopefully, after the uncertainty of the last few days, at least we now all have an idea of what the next half term is going to look like.

I would like to thank you all once again for your kind consideration regarding childcare needed for today – we do appreciate that.

Following last night's announcement of a national lockdown, we have been forced to change the information and key worker criteria we used in our online form yesterday to allocate places in school. The criteria used in the form yesterday, was due to us making the decision that the school would close for a short period of time while we assessed the increased risk from COVID19 and not because of a national lockdown. The lockdown does change a few things regarding places being offered in school. Please read the following information very carefully.

Key Workers and Vulnerable Children Places

The school has a clear duty of care to all its stakeholders – children, staff, parents and the local community. The number of cases in this area continues to increase significantly. Another 4 members of our school staff and families have tested positive today, along with a number of children and their family members. I have never known so many people with a positive test result or the need to isolate. Cases have increased by almost 100% in the last week in this area.

Obviously, this is very concerning to us all. I must stress to you all that the safest place for children to be is at home at this time. Mixing with other children will heighten the risk of infection and should be avoided unless there are **NO OTHER OPTIONS**. I am not trying to scaremonger – I am trying to state facts that we have been given by the Government and health officials.

The number of parents who requested places for their children yesterday is unmanageable for our school to accommodate safely, in light of new national restrictions. After carefully considering our risk assessment this morning, we have realised that we are simply not able to accommodate such a high number of children and adults safely in school.

Eligibility for Key Worker Places

Therefore, we have had to review our offer of places for provision in school where one of the following criteria is met:

- Both parents **MUST** be Key Workers who are unable to work from home.
- A single parent household **MUST** be a Key Worker unable to work from home.
- Children who are classed as Vulnerable (children who have a social worker or an Education, Health and Care Plan)

These places are for families who have **no adult at home or childcare bubble** to look after children and who are immediately required in the response to this virus. Regardless of your key worker status, if there is an adult at home, you will not be offered a place.

Please note – we can now offer part-time places as we realise that there a number of parents who only work part-time and you will not need this provision when you are at home.

We know how challenging this is and we are not trying to be awkward. However, we can only accommodate a limited number of children in each year group whilst at the same time also balancing remote learning for the majority of children as well. This is made even more difficult due to a depleting number of staff available for work. I am sure you will all understand.

If the position changes over the next few weeks, we will review this offer again. However, what this does mean is that a number of you who were offered places yesterday, will be unable to take these up now. I can only apologise. When the places were allocated yesterday, we were working within different guidelines – these all changed when the lockdown was announced.

We will email ALL parents who completed the form by 3pm. There will also be a link to an online form for parents who feel they are still eligible for a place, so you can inform us whether this is a full-time or a part-time place which is required and complete the days you will need the care for. This form will be sent out each Thursday to be completed for the following week, so that shift changes can be catered for. The form for this week needs to be completed by 7pm tonight.

Nursery Children

Please note, our Nursery will remain closed to all but Key Worker and Vulnerable children for at least the next two weeks.

Timings

The times for this provision have also changed. Due to the large number of sibling groups accessing the provision, ALL children will start between 8.30am and 8.45am and will finish between 3pm and 3.15pm. Please note – this includes our Nursery key worker children. These new times will take effect from Wednesday 6th January 2021.

Again, I would like to reiterate that this is not ideal. We are not living in ideal times. We are all trying to keep afloat at the moment and doing the very best we can. I am sorry that there will be some parents who probably feel quite let down by this and the changes. It is simply unavoidable.

Take care, look after yourselves and stay safe.

Very Best Wishes,

Mrs Jane Davis
Head Teacher