



Friday March 20th 2020

PYTHON 5 Update

Dear Parents and Carers,

There will be two newsletters today for you to read and work through following further and contrary government guidance very helpfully published just after midnight last night. This is a constantly changing situation and the official guidance when it finally comes is vague and open to gross mis-interpretation and remains “guidance”.

The media are not helping this by putting distinctive spins on words, phrases and meanings to play schools and families off each other and already try to cause discord and anger.

This is a game, during this national emergency **I simply will not play**. This is a stern letter from your Head teacher and I want to you take it as that. This is not a game.

I shall make this very clear to you all in this update on the decisive strategy we will take at West Jesmond primary school to create an organised and calm situation for emergency child care to support those Key Workers where it is **absolutely impossible for their child to be at home** without impacting on essential front-line services.

I am the Head teacher of this school. This is my school. I have to determine how we will meet and solve this crisis. It is my responsibility to care responsibly for the children in this school, to protect my staff and to create the emergency child-care we have been asked to provide. It is my decision and I will be very clear about that as to what we will be able to safely provide in the future.

We are already approaching staffing crisis levels and without parents responsibly keeping their children at home already, we may well have had to close. I genuinely want to thank staff, who despite serious medical issues for themselves or partners or family members have continued to come into work to try and keep education and normality for the children going as long as we physically can until the enforced government closure this evening.

We shall be sending out a further newsletter today with details of any changes we make to the planned emergency child care strategy and procedures we put in place. This will develop over next week as demand and available provision becomes clearer and again may well change with very short notice. Schools and parents will have to adapt and respond to this, so communication is

Executive Head Teacher: Gary Wallis-Clarke MA in Education BA (Hons) NPQH

Deputy Head Teacher: Rebecca McVittie MSc, BSc (Hons) PGCE

West Jesmond Primary School, Tankerville Terrace,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3AJ

T: (0191)2810000 E: office@westjesmond.newcastle.sch.uk

W: www.westjesmondprimary.org.uk



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critical; as is total compliance, transparency, honesty and a thought for others including the staff trying to run this provision.

I shall now outline our strategy for accessing the emergency child-care provision which **ALL PARENTS** must follow.

1. Government guidance is very, very clear. **ALL children must remain at home for their safety** and to reduce the transmission of the COVID 19 unless absolutely necessary. This applies to all children, regardless of their parents' occupation.
2. West Jesmond Primary School and the national education system will close today and this enforced closure will remain in place until the order is lifted by the government.
3. **We have been asked to facilitate emergency child care, deploying only a 'skeleton staff' for the children of Key Workers (as now defined by the government) where it is critical for the continued delivery of front line services, that they access this emergency provision.** I would ask parents to read and consider this statement VERY, VERY carefully. Just because your occupation is listed on a government website, does not mean that you should or have to send your child into school when they would be far safer staying at home. **Parents need to act responsibly and consider others and the impact on wider society of accessing this limited childcare when they do not absolutely have to.**
4. Parents who meet the criteria as a Key Worker **MUST** apply for a place using the on line form which will be updated accordingly and be inserted into the Python 6 final newsletter of the day.
5. Details of both parent/carers occupations **must be given** to determine priority if we reach a limited provision situation. Our strategy is to prioritise children where **BOTH** parents are Key Workers first and then assess availability for provision where **ONE** parent is a Key worker and there is compelling evidence in the on-line application that the second parent/carer/family member cannot safely look after the child at home.
6. We will potentially have to make some hard decisions. That is my job and I will make them.
7. It would help enormously if parents can request detailed part-time provision specifically to meet critical need rather than blanket full time child care where this is known; though we do appreciate for front line staff this can change very suddenly to meet changing need and demand.
8. **This is a real national crisis and access to this provision should be viewed as a serious, emergency step. All of our lives may come to depend upon it so it MUST not be abused.**
9. We will assess all the applications and parents securing a place will be informed by email (as listed on the form). **ONLY children, where parents have been sent a confirmatory email, will be admitted to school next week, starting with absolute priority children on Monday.** All other children will be turned away and sent home. As the situation develops we will be able to assess capacity and hopefully increase provision to meet essential demand but at this point in time I cannot promise parents' anything other than we will do our absolute best to meet critical demand.
10. We have made separate provision for children in Local Authority Care, have active social worker involvement through a Child Protection Order, or have an Education Health Care

Plan to fulfil our statutory duties for these pupils during the school closure period and families have been personally informed.

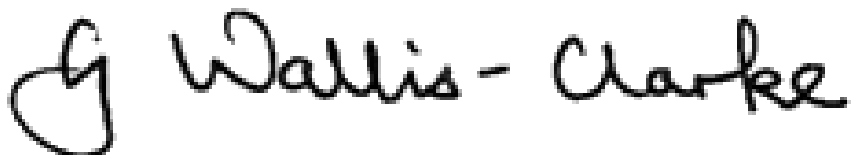
11. Children who are offered a place to the emergency care and where parents have been informed by email their application is successful will be given a start date in the confirmatory email.
12. We will continue to keep working with and informing parents throughout this crisis until school re-opens via the school website.

I do not apologise for being firm in my tone in this update.

At this point in time we need decisive, clear leadership to support us all and we have to manage this effectively.

My final newsletter of the week will be sent out later today with details of the updated application form for 'Key Worker' parents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G Wallis-Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.