

Newchurch Community Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs J Narraway

6th January 2021

Dear parent/carer,

What a great Newchurch family we are! We are delighted with the way in which all the children and parents have done their very best to work remotely today. Honestly, we cannot thank you enough for your support and patience. We are all working in a very different way and it is wonderful to see the genuine partnership between school and home at its best!

Free School Meals

When classes were isolating due to a positive case of COVID-19, children eligible for benefits related free school meals were provided with food parcels. As this is a national lockdown, we will be returning to the system we used in March 2020 – supermarket vouchers. The school office, probably Bev, will be contacting you with details and should you need any support redeeming them, she is the expert!

Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme

We have been notified that the COVID-19 Winter Grant application will be extended to March so any families who need help their food and utility bills this winter may be eligible for help from the Covid19 Winter Grant scheme. This is additional funding over the winter months to support with food and basic utility bills. Here are the details:

To be eligible for the grant you must be one of the following status:

1. A parent or carer of a child living with you aged 0 to 16 years;
2. A parent or carer of a young person aged 16 to 18 years living with you;
3. A young person aged 16 – 18 years living independently;
4. A parent or carer of a young person aged 19 to 24 years with special educational needs or disability (SEND) if they have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or have had an EHCP previously;
5. A young person aged 19 to 24 years with SEND if you have an EHCP or have had an EHCP previously;
6. A young person aged 18 - 21 years who has previously spent time in the care of Warrington Borough Council as a child.



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Also, to be eligible for the grant you must currently be claiming one of the following financial support benefits (income is based on household):

- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190);
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit;
- Universal Credit.

If you meet both the eligibility status in the list 1-6 AND are currently claiming one of the listed financial support benefits, please complete the following online Winter Grant application form:

www.warrington.gov.uk/COVID2020-WG . You will be able to make a claim for each child in your household within this one application. If you would like further information on the grant or support completing the form please email: covidwinterpaymentgrant@warrington.gov.uk or call Contact Warrington 01925 443322.

Over the recent months more and more families are experiencing financial hardship as a result of changes in their employment circumstances. If you are in receipt of the benefits detailed above, your child may be eligible for free school meals. Please contact the school office if you think this may be the case and we will be happy to check for you.

Critical worker and vulnerable child places

We have been pleased to welcome into school some children whose parents have critical worker status as identified by the government. As stated in our letter on Monday, we need to first of all give priority to those families where **both** parents are critical workers and single parents with critical worker status. We are sure you all understand the reasons for this.

Using the information we provided in the letter on Monday, which detailed the critical worker categories, we made our decisions. Some of the categories use words such as 'essential', 'administrative' and 'key staff'. We all like to feel that our job is important and makes a difference and therefore, we have used these terms as our way of identifying those eligible for a place.

We also stated that places would be allocated to children with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) or children who were vulnerable. According to the guidance published at the start of January, vulnerable children include those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued full-time attendance, this might include:



- children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children’s social care services or in the process of being referred to children’s services
- adopted children or children on a special guardianship order
- those at risk of becoming NEET (‘not in employment, education or training’)
- those living in temporary accommodation
- those who are young carers
- those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- others at the provider and local authority’s discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

Due to the number of positive cases of COVID-19 increasing in the UK and the rate of transmission being higher, we have moved back to the children in Year 1 – Year 6 having their own desks and sitting 2 metres apart from one another. This was how we organised the learning environment in the summer term when Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 returned to school. We believe that this organisation is safer, and allows for better social distancing. However, with this classroom layout, space is restricted and as such we need to think carefully about the safety of the children and staff in school, the rate of transmission, as well as the number of people in one space. Therefore, we cannot accommodate more large numbers of children in any classroom, and need to consider each classroom’s capacity. In some classes, we have reached capacity solely by accommodating children who have both parents as critical workers, or single parents who have critical worker status.

Some of the returned google forms indicated that one parent was a critical worker. These children have been placed on the waiting list should a place be made available in a class that has reached its limit. We appreciate that this is hard for some of you but we need to ensure that we are consistent and fair in our designation of places, whilst maintaining the safety of all in school at this present time. It is important to ensure that staff also feel safe and secure whilst delivering the learning to your children, and we need to remember that they also want to keep their own families safe too.

This lockdown is different from the one in March 2020 as schools were asked to provide childcare for children whose parents were critical workers. Providing childcare is not our purpose in this lockdown, continuing your child’s education is.

Whilst we are at the start of our ‘blended learning’, all children with a place in school are expected to be in full time. We are not accepting part time places in school at this time until we are able to ensure the safety of the children and staff. Once we have delivered ‘blended learning’ for a few weeks, and we feel that it is safe to do so, we **may** consider asking those parents whose child is currently in school (in a class that is at its limit) and does not need to be in full time to work remotely when they can. The purpose of this is to allow the children who have one parent who is a critical worker to come into school in those classes for some of the week. This is not something we cannot promise will happen.

Some parents have also contacted us saying they are concerned that their child is falling behind and some have demanded that their child has a place in school. Can we reassure you that we are aware of the needs of all the children whether they are working remotely or in school, and they will be given



support the same way they would if they were in the school building. Being in school does not give additional learning time to the children, they are all treated equally and the online groupings used in classes of the younger children especially are smaller to accommodate this. Thank you to those parents who have understood this and have shown great understanding, when things are difficult.

Hopefully, you can see the difficult decisions we have to make at these times but it all comes down to the safety of the staff and children in the school and so the tough decisions need to be made. We do hope you understand that we love having all the children in but only when it is safe to do so. We also appreciate the difficulties some parents have juggling their work.

On Monday, we will begin our welfare calls and so if you have anything you wish to discuss you can. Thank you to those parents who have already shared their difficulties with us; we may not have a solution at this moment in time but it has helped us to understand individual circumstances. After some reflection time, we may find a way forward to support you – just let the cogs keep turning and usually that happens!

We are in the early days of this new way of working, even for those classes who needed to isolate last term. We are on Day One so please give it time to settle and evolve, and trust us when we say that we will get into a rhythm and blended learning will become the new norm.

Take care and keep safe.

Mrs Jayne Narraway

Head Teacher



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