

From today, Friday 20 March 2020, all schools, colleges and early years settings in England will close. This is not a statutory requirement – schools are being asked to help as part of a national response asking schools to open to provide care for children of key workers and vulnerable children.

The government has asked parents to keep their children at home and asked schools to remain open for those children that absolutely need to attend...every child who can be cared for safely at home, should be.

Any child who can be at home **should be** at home. The recommendation to send children to school is only so that key workers who don't have any alternative arrangements are not forced to stay off work. Therefore it does not follow that all key workers on the list would or should be sending their children to school.

Therefore, if a parent is in the key worker group but can arrange safe childcare other than school they should do this. This is to ensure that we protect those workers who are in critical roles from infection as far as possible. The guidance explicitly states: "The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading."

The provision will be very different to that normally provided by schools for these pupils: it will be about **care, not education**. This is about keeping children safe and allowing key workers (such as NHS staff) to go to work and care for the sick, or to keep food supply chains moving.

Schools that provide this care will be free to determine what the provision looks like and what they deem to be best for the pupils they are supporting.

Our provision will take place in the school hall as we need to limit the space we are using to reduce the risk of infection.

To maintain social distancing, we will be running with a **very limited number of staff** - maximum 4 staff in school and this will be rotated weekly. This does not mean that I will always be on site as Headteacher. Clearly my role at this moment in time is crucial in terms of decision-making and I have been advised that I should be off site as much as others but to be contactable 24/7.

Critically, it is schools that are responsible for offering places to pupils who may be eligible to attend this provision. We have asked you to identify if you are eligible and it is our responsibility to prioritise offers to families according to capacity, need and health advice from PHE.

We have been inundated with requests for care provision. We will notify you by telephone today if you are a parent for whom we will provide the reduced provision offer. The highest priorities will be for families where both parents are key workers or a sole parent is a key worker. We do not have the capacity to cater for all the request we have received and initial first filter suggests that some will not meet the criteria. This is not us being unaccommodating but, merely making you aware that this provision is for those for whom it is the 'last and only resort'.

If after reading this and gaining further clarity, you no longer require school care provision, please ring school asap to let us know so that we can allocate to those key workers for whom it is the ONLY option.

For those children entitled to free school meals: You can collect a packed lunch from school between 11.30a.m.- 12.30p.m daily. we will send a text to parents of those children who are entitled to this service.

This has been a very emotional day in school for everyone. It is heart-breaking for us to think that this could potentially be the last time we will all be in school this academic year! I am forever hopeful that it won't be and we can gain some form of normality before the end of the summer term – especially for our Year 6 young people! I am sure that whatever happens, we will hold a celebration with them to mark their time at primary school properly as soon as is humanly possible!

For us all here - Escomb is definitely a great team to be part of and we thank you wholeheartedly for your support and understanding in such difficult times and for playing a crucial part in our whole school team. Keep safe everyone!

Wendy Gill & Staff