

18th March 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

We are facing unprecedented times at the moment and the situation relating to coronavirus is exerting pressure on all parts of society. At the current time, advice from Public Health England and from the Government is that schools should remain open. If this changes, our guidance will similarly reflect national direction. We are aware that our headteachers and governors are doing all they can to keep our schools open. However, schools themselves are under pressure due to staffing and numbers of staff who equally have to self-isolate in response to national guidance.

We are aware that many schools are already making decisions on closing year groups and classes. As a local authority, we have provided the following guidance to schools. This provides direction on prioritising attendance for pupils and students as staffing pressures make it difficult to operate the school with full attendance. We have identified particular groups of pupils we consider are the greatest priority for schools at this moment in time if they have reduced staffing. These are identified below:

Priority 1:

- Children of parents who are critical workers in health, care, emergency services. This would include medical staff, adult care workers, social workers adults and children, Police, fire and paramedic staff;
- Children of teachers, teaching assistants and essential school-based staff required to keep schools open and operational;
- Children specifically identified by Children's Services as priorities to be in school;
- Children who are vulnerable but whose particular needs only come to light through parent communication;

Priority 2:

- Children who are in receipt of pupil premium or who qualify for a free school meal;
- Children with elderly carers;
- Children with special educational learning needs but who do not have to isolate due to medical vulnerabilities in accordance with Public Health guidelines;

Priority 3:

- Students in secondary schools preparing for public examinations this year;
- Pupils in primary schools in upper key stage 2 preparing for national assessments and transition to secondary education in September 2020;

Priority 4:

- Other pupils according to local need and agreed at a local school level

Schools will be asked to follow this guidance. I recognise that, for some parents, this may mean that your child may not be attending school and may be required to remain at home. Our schools are aware of the need to ensure that, as far as possible, children have some direction in how they can use this time in self-study.

We have a moral duty to ensure that we do our part to support our critical services and our most vulnerable children and young people and seek your support.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff

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