

Banbridge Area Nursery & Primary Principals' Group

Dear Parents / Carers,

Ref: Supporting Children of Key Workers in Primary School

At 5pm yesterday evening, the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland, Peter Weir MLA, made a statement outlining how schools will close from the end of the school day, Friday 20th March. However, school will open with a skeleton staff on Wednesday 25th March to support identified Key Workers.

You are receiving this letter as your child's primary school is represented, by your Principal, on the Banbridge Area Nursery and Primary Principals' Group. Many Principals on this association have agreed to follow a coordinated response to ensure that we support the children of key workers in a similar way across our schools. Some schools may be in a position to provide more support, depending on the numbers of staff still available to work.

Firstly, it is vitally important that schools are aware how many children of key workers will be attending school on Wednesday morning. With this in mind, if you are an identified key worker, please make contact with school by **12pm Monday 23rd March** to inform school if your child will be attending. This may be by phone or be emailing info@stmarys.banbridge.ni.sch.uk.

Before contacting school, **please pay particular attention to the following points**. School will not be operating a 'normal' school day. School will be operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time.

Points to consider

- A list of key workers, issued by the Department of Education is listed overleaf. Only children with **BOTH** parents working as key workers, should consider attending school. In single parent families, the individual parent **MUST** be a key worker.
- If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child to school. For example, with other family members, friends etc. Please try and use school as a **last resort**. **This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance.**
- Initially, we will open **Breakfast Club as normal from 7.45am**. Classes will run until **2.00pm** at which time care will be provided by our Afterschool Club staff until 6pm. Charges remain the same.
- Children attending will not be required to wear their school uniform. Please be advised that schools will be performing **childcare duties**, rather than teaching, as not all teachers are currently available to teach specific year groups and teachers must also be available to provide online / remote learning.

As principals of our schools we have a duty of care to our staff, many of whom may be self-isolating, some who have or whose children/relatives have underlying medical issues. But we will try our very best to facilitate care for key workers. We **do not** want to create a situation where we are bringing in large numbers of adults and children to create an environment contrary to Pupil Health and Governance guidance. We need to minimise the numbers of children and adults in school to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

We would ask that you pay attention to the points outlined above before deciding to send your child to school. Obviously, it goes without saying, if your **only** option is to send your child to school, we will look after them in order to support you in your important role.

Take care everyone. Stay safe!

Yours sincerely,

Des O'Hagan

Principal

LIST OF KEY WORKERS AS OUTLINED ON DOCUMENTATION ISSUED TO SCHOOLS ON 19TH MARCH 2020

Please work with us to ensure that schools operate with a limited number of children and staff.

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector
- Education and childcare. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response
- Utilities and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g hygiene, medical etc)
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.