



24TH March 2020

NORTH RIDGE - NEW SCHOOL CLOSURE GUIDANCE

Dear Parents and Carers

I am sure you will all be aware that from Friday 20th March all schools were closed until further notice with the exception of children of parents who are 'key workers' and those classed as 'vulnerable pupils'. As a special school all our pupils could be classed as vulnerable. This will be an entirely different role for schools and school staff, being primarily about care, rather than education.

Following final definitions of what is being asked of schools and the recent request by the prime minister we are constantly reviewing the offer to you.

This information will be relayed to parents via Groupcall text on a regular basis and through our school website.

As you will understand, we are in unprecedented times and we are doing our very best to respond to government guidance as it comes through whilst at the same time looking after our pupils and school staff. I understand the concerns you have at this worrying time, I am sure you will give your support to the measures we are trying put in place.

However the government guidance released today **22nd March** importantly states that:

We have asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and for schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Schools are therefore being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to

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the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

While as many schools as possible should try to stay open for eligible pupils, this will not be possible for all settings.

We have been asked to reduce the number of staff in school at any one time in order to minimise risks and **therefore provision will be more limited.**

Our site team are working hard to keep the school clean and safe but this is where we have been hit with the most absence.

As well as duty of care for all the pupils, I have a duty of care for my staff who are coming in over the next few weeks. We too have to consider the principles of 'social-distancing' to keep us all safe, and I already have **significantly reduced numbers of staff** available to safely manage this emergency provision.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- **We would expect that parents have exhausted all other options before using this emergency provision.**
- **To put this in perspective, our staff will be risking their health and that of their families in order to provide this childcare. Therefore we respectfully ask that it is only used if it is going to make a significant difference.**
- **We would expect that no parent would choose to send their child to emergency childcare provision to mix with other children unless they had no other choice as they are placing the children and those who they may come in to contact with at risk.**

We really can only provide this provision for essential children without compromising everyone's safety.

In light of current new guidance, we limit our intake during the crisis to keep the school safe for both pupils and staff.

Advice from the Health Secretary last week suggests that schools should be opening for no more than 10- 20% of their normal school population.

Recommendations are that staff in high risk categories should not go into school and likewise staff who are living with relatives in the high-risk categories should also not go in to school. Other staff should attend on a rota basis in order to safeguard social distancing for staff.

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With current staffing levels we will not be able to accommodate all the children unless you are a key worker or it is an emergency

We are dealing with incredibly challenging situations when it comes to ensuring the well-being of staff and pupils alike. I want to make sure that we can stay open for as long as possible, so in order to do this I will need to take the following steps:

1. I am asking all parents to re-consider their immediate need for further provision at school, if you can safely keep your children at home then please do so. **Please email or telephone school if you still require childcare**
2. We will commence our welfare calls to parents today and this will include some doorstep visits- we will not be asking to come into your homes but will pass work to you or ask you to bring your child to the window and wave to us.

Please do not send your child to school until we confirm that school is fully open again.

For those pupils that are in school. We will continue to offer the normal school hours. At this point we are in a fast-moving situation and provision relies on staff being well and able to come to school, which has been a changing picture over the week. We will have to make arrangements on a daily basis.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in incredibly difficult circumstances for everyone in our school community.

You can support us by following us on the website or Twitter. You can also ask your child to draw and colour in a rainbow and stick it in your window. Post a picture of this on Twitter and we will see it if we come to visit you.

Please carefully consider the contents of this letter, I hope that you and your families remain safe and well.

Kindest Regards

Bernice Kostick

Head Teacher

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