

Heswall Primary School

'Better Never Stops'



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Dear Parents,

8.1.21

It has been an incredible week for us all. We are aware that some of our children were fast asleep in bed assuming they were coming into school on Tuesday only to wake up to hear about Lockdown 3. We are truly saddened that schools have been closed to all but Key Workers and Vulnerable children but the safety of everybody is absolutely paramount.

On Tuesday, we invited parents to apply for a Key Worker place. Eligibility was clear from the government guidelines but unfortunately it was not clear as to what that capacity should be. We identified through our own detailed risk assessments that in order to protect the staff, there must be enough space in each classroom to ensure they could socially distance from the children and each other. This has meant that there are different numbers of children in each bubble and there will likely be further preventative measures to follow including the full reintroduction of socially distanced seating for the children from Y2 upwards. Currently, children can sit together as long as they face the same direction.

The guidelines that we work towards advise that children should be in small consistent groups and also that *most* children should be at home accessing remote learning. We have a large number of Key Workers and that has meant that there is a very high number of children onsite. In an earlier letter, we advised that if a child could be at home then they must be at home. We are though, only offering full time places and this is for two specific reasons. Firstly, it is so all the bubbles stay consistent. It keeps the same group of children and adults together all week and will avoid some families having to rely on different people on different days. Secondly, it is to help the teachers plan for progression of the children's learning.

We know that our parents are the doctors, nurses, teachers and teaching assistants, carers, electricity and water providers, paramedics, children centre workers, shop workers and firefighters as well as all the background jobs that supports these roles including the school and NHS office workers etc. There are far too many to list here but this community appreciates what you are doing for us all. We know that you need us and we are here for you.

For my staff, this week has been like no other for them. They were prepared for the new term and despite talk in the news last weekend, they found out on Monday night, along with the rest of the population, that schools were closing to most children. The teaching staff then, without any complaints, significantly adjusted their work and have split themselves in half to provide physical teaching and online learning. This is an enormous challenge that they are attempting to undertake.

Since Monday, the number of positive Covid-19 cases in Wirral has once again risen dramatically. 505 people have tested positive in Wirral today with an increase of 2,627 in the last week (a 64.7% rise in the cases from the previous 7 days). Closing schools is one of the emergency actions that this country is trying to tackle numbers like this and children have not been in school before when cases have been this high. There is a concern that if there are too many children in school, the number of family bubbles mixing via their children will be too high resulting in a prolonged period of lockdown. We also know that there have already been many classes closed in many Wirral primary schools resulting in more Key Workers becoming unable to fulfil their role. There are approximately 120 children attending school during this current lockdown.

If Key Worker children can be at home *every day* completing remote learning, then they must be at home unless there are specific reasons to be agreed with the school e.g. a parents' medical condition or a heavily pregnant parent is working from home. If a Key Worker's child can't be at home each day then the child should attend school every day. Vulnerable children (using the government definition) should attend school regardless of who is at home if a place has been confirmed.

The school is not removing any places from any families unless we are required to in future guidance. We are requesting that families consider for themselves to only continue to send children to physically attend school if they absolutely need it. Please email the school if you change your mind. This is to protect other children and the families they come into contact with and all the staff. The school understands its obligations and will continue to do its best for everyone. If keeping your child away from school would mean they could come into harm, then they must continue to attend. We appreciate the sensitivity of this letter and we are absolutely not trying to make anybody feel unwelcome here at school. We adore having the children here and we are here for you and will give you our very best. The vaccines are on their way and by today, 1,092,885 people have had their first dose. There is hope around the corner and this pandemic and lockdown will end.

Yours truly,

Mr J Lawrenson, Headteacher