



Friday 20 March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you for your support in these unusual and testing times. Our advice as a Trust is to try and **keep your child at home** so that the spread of the virus is halted. This will help to keep them safe, your families safe and our communities safe. **We must do more now to safeguard our futures.**

Below is the advice that has just been released by government:

- As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing
- 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.**
- **That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home**, wherever possible, and asked 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 the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.
- Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. **Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home, and every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.**

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
2. If a child is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then we will *try* and make school provision available for them.
3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus.



Trust Advice:

Keep your child at home and adhere to the social distancing guidelines.

The following questions should also help to determine whether you really need to ask the school for your child to come in:

- 1. Are you a 'key worker' as defined by the government advice?**
Please check the definitions in the government advice in Annex 1 below
- 2. If yes, have you confirmed with your employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, your specific role is necessary?**
Not every role will be essential to continue. Please confirm this as a matter of urgency with your employer. There may be circumstances where individuals are essential only for certain days or parts of the week.
- 3. If you are still required to go to work, can your child be left safely at home?**
For most of our older children, they will be in a position to take care of themselves and look after younger siblings. It is important that they are safe to do so. Checking in frequently with them is one way of managing this.
- 4. Is there someone else who can safely look after the children?**
The starting point will be a partner who does not work in a key worker category. There may be others who can safely support your children.
- 5. If you still need your child to attend school, can this be limited to specific days or times?**
Some parents have already confirmed that they only require their child to be looked after for a limited time/number of days. This is very helpful as it helps to reduce the amount of social contact.
- 6. If you still need your child to attend, are you able to transport your child to school?**
Somerset County Council will aim to provide a bus service on Monday next week. After that, we should be telling them what transport we require so that we limit the number of bus drivers that need to come out.

Schools are operating an emergency service only and not a general child care service. We wish to fight the virus together and our aim is to stop the spread of the virus through self-isolation.

If you really think that your child fits the emergency service criteria in this letter please email your school with your child's name, year group and your personal contact details in case we need to close that school in an emergency. Schools hold the right to make final decisions on their capacity and ability to take children in this emergency period.

Thank you for your support in these very difficult times. Keep safe

Gavin Ball

Chief Executive



Annex 1: Key Worker Definition as defined by UK Government

Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and support staff and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services

This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arm's length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security

This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If workers think they fall within the critical categories above they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.