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| **Ref: Supporting Children of Key Workers in Primary School** |

Saturday, 21st March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Following the announcement this week that schools would close as a precaution to prevent spread and contamination of Covid 19, it is with a heavy heart that we have had to close indefinitely. We wish all our families the best in the coming weeks as each and everyone of us have had to face major changes in our lives. The last few days have been very quiet in school and we miss the children and normality of school life.

The Minister for Education has outlined that schools will make provision for children of Key Workers. This will operate with a skeleton amount of staff to support identified Key Workers’ children. It is important to note **this is not a statutory requirement – schools are being asked to help as part of a national response.**

**The recent medical advice on how to reduce the risk of and 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.**

Children **MUST** be looked after at **HOME** where this is **AT ALL POSSIBLE** – our school facility is a **SERVICE OF LAST RESORT**. **This is in order to comply with general public health advice on social distancing.** This is to protect our children and to ensure that the maximum possible number of Key Workers are able to go to work to provide all of us with the essential services that we need.

Many Principals from theDerry Principals’ 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. We wish to express our gratitude to all of the essential key workers and commend you on the fantastic job that you are doing, your commitment and dedication is very much appreciated.

It is vitally important that schools are aware how many children of key workers will be attending school. Schools will have a limited capacity due to social distancing regulations and a reduced workforce.

With this in mind, before you apply for a school place for your child (ren) please consider:

1. Your work role, days and hours of supervision required.
2. Do you have a partner, another family member or safe and trusted friend who can look after your child?
3. Your partner or family member is working from home and is therefore considered to be able to provide childcare.

If you can make any alternative arrangements, we would ask that you consider doing so. This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance.

Refer to the list of specific job titles within each sector to check if you are:

* A single parent identified as a key worker
* Both parents identified as key workers
* If both parents are key workers, consider your roles, days and hours of work pattern. One parent might be at home during school hours on various days.

**We all have a duty to each other to use this facility responsibly.** If the demand for places at school exceeds the available capacity, we may require parents to provide an official letter from their employer confirming their key worker status. In addition, where capacity is becoming exhausted, we may have no option but to require confirmed key workers to sign a daily declaration that they have no one at home on that day to look after their children.

Only children with both parents working as key workers and both parents out at work at the same time should consider attending school. In single families, the individual parent must be the Key Worker.

Please contact the school by email before 9am on Monday 23rd March to request a place for your child/ren. This has to be by e-mail. (**mramsey934@c2kni.net**) This email should contain information that is relevant to the request., a contact number for work and home. In your email it is up to you to clearly outline how you meet the government criteria. Please note that this is only a request, you should not bring your child to school until notified by the school that there is a place available**.**

* **Only children with BOTH parents working as Key Workers and only when both parents are working AT THE SAME TIME should their children attend school.**
* **In single parent families, the main carer MUST be a Key Worker and be required to work.**
* **Only families with an offer of a place should attend the school and they should only do this when directed to by the school.**

Please bear in mind schools can only offer places based on their capacity and have to take into careful consideration the safety and wellbeing of all the staff and pupils. This may mean schools have to **prioritise according to need and availability of staff i.e. not accept the children of every key worker on the Minister’s list**.

Schools will not be able to operate a ‘normal’ school day. Schools will be offering reduced provision to children of Keyworkers who do not have provision for their children to stay at home. Essentially childcare, as opposed to teaching and learning will be provided in schools, as not all teachers are currently available to teach specific year groups and teachers must also be available to provide online / remote learning. It may not be your child’s year group teacher working on a particular day.

Many of our schools are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time. Provision of any level of service will be dependent on staff availability and the school may have to be closed if this becomes a problem.

We would ask that you pay attention to the above points before applying for a place for your child/ren.

**When we have considered all applications and ensured that we are adhering to all health & safety requirements, we will reopen.**

These are unprecedented times and we know that everyone is digging deep to support the national effort to keep everyone safe and mitigate risk.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ramsey

Principal

Derry Principals’ Association