



The de Ferrers Trust

20 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

'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, colleges and other educational establishments 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.'

This is the latest government advice, published this morning.

In summary, if your children can be safely cared for at home, please do not send them to school from Monday.

Attendance at school is no longer compulsory and schools nationally are closed from this afternoon for the vast majority of pupils.

However, if you meet one of the two criteria outlined below, please do NOT make arrangements for your children to be cared for by vulnerable groups, such as the elderly. Send them to school instead.

It must be incredibly frustrating if you do not meet the 'qualifying criteria' outlined below and you would like us to care for your children. However, I must ask for us all to work together for the greater good in this time of crisis.

My staff are everyday superstars and are proud and prepared to do their bit for society. Although they are superstars, they are not superhuman, despite them trying to prove me wrong on a daily basis. They have their own families. They are not immune to COVID-19. Let's remember that's why the government is taking these extreme measures.

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In saying that, we are absolutely willing and ready to look after those children who meet the criteria below and we are proud to support parents who are in need of our help.

Children who should come to school on Monday are:

- 'vulnerable students' (those 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 an Education, Health and Care Plan)
- Children of 'critical workers' (please see the appendix below for full details of this list). Only one parent/carer needs to be a 'critical worker' to qualify.

If we know that your child does not meet either of these criteria and you send them to school, we reserve the right to send them home.

Your Principal will be in touch about specific arrangements for Monday onwards.

We will share further information regarding this from all appropriate agencies as and when it is shared with us.

Whilst we appreciate that you will want answers to your many queries quickly, we ask that you refrain from contacting our schools unless it is a matter of urgency in order to give school leaders the time to plan effectively.

We thank you once again for your continued support, understanding and patience in these challenging times.

Further, I would like to thank all of my colleagues who have not just gone the extra mile this week – they've done a marathon. In my opinion, this has been the most challenging week in English education since World War II.

Stay safe, healthy and look after you and yours.

Ian McNeilly
Chief Executive



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Appendix – Critical Workers list

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, ***and you cannot keep your child safe at home*** then your children will be prioritised for education provision:

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 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.



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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.