



The Federation of St Bede's & St Bernadette Catholic Schools

Federation Headteacher: Ewa Ostrynska

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CRITICAL WORKER CHILDCARE PROVISION

23.03.2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you because of the large numbers of parents/carers who have signed up for the school offer of care provision at both our schools for the coming weeks. I am concerned that we are actually defeating the purpose of the government's decision to close schools – which is to increase social distancing to reduce the spread of the virus at this point in time, therefore lessening the impact on the NHS. Ultimately this will save lives.

It is crucial that schools stay open to allow key workers to carry out their critical roles; however the guidance is advisory rather than mandatory. I must re-iterate we are committed to keeping the school open to provide this support, however I must emphasise that it should **only to be used if there is no other alternative**. Keeping children at home will be a better way to stop the virus spreading.

The following statement from the guidance illustrates this point: *"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."*

We have received further requests for a place today; if we were to offer a place for all of these requests, then we would need to ensure that we have a larger number of adults on site and therefore have a large gathering – increasing the likelihood of the virus spreading.

I will draw your attention to the recent message put out by Sadiq Khan:

LONDON: Please act immediately on what we're saying today.

→ Do not leave your home unless you have a very good reason.

→ Do not go to work or use public transport, unless you do a critical job.

→ If you ignore this advice, people could die. #COVID19

I know this is a stark message, but it is so important that we pay heed to it. I would urge you to look at all the possibilities available to you and try to find a solution for your child to be cared for at home.

It is absolutely crucial that unless both parents are on our original key worker list, then you should be providing care for your child at home.

We must ensure that the children of critical frontline staff are provided for so that they can continue the incredible work they do in treating those patients with COVID-19 symptoms. Hospitals are already struggling to cope with the demand for intensive care beds and this will only increase over the coming weeks and months.

We are now contacting all parents who have made contact with the school to request childcare, to try to reduce our numbers so that we can remain open for the most critical workers. We would like you to let us know if you have now found alternative provision **or** if you believe you still fall into this category and we are the only childcare option available to you. I hope we are able to reduce the numbers using this method.

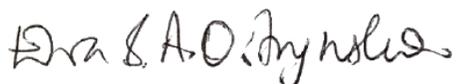
If you do still believe you need the place, we will be requesting a letter from your employer, stating that your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, as outlined by the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson. I am very concerned about the staff and children being exposed to such large numbers, which increases the likelihood of the virus spreading. This may lead to more staff needing to self-isolate which may mean we have to close – this will disadvantage those who seriously need this provision. If need be, we will start to prioritise places to ensure that we can stay open.

I hope we can support each other, find solutions and rally round as a community, whilst minimising the risk to our children and staff. Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.

These decisions may be hard to take but firm action is needed at these times. Please therefore think carefully and remember where at all possible, we must **stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives**.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ewa Ostrynska', written in a cursive style.

Ewa Ostrynska

Federation Headteacher