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13th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that everyone is safe and well.

Firstly, let me confirm that as a school we want to support our front-line workers who are critical to the fight against COVID. We want to make sure that those parents who absolutely cannot safely have their children at home during this national lockdown, have a school place. However, I would like to further explain school's current position.

Last week, we sent a survey to everyone in our school community to ascertain who needed a key worker place for their child/children in our school. As a result of this feedback, we then planned our bubbles and staffing capacity ready to open school back up on Wednesday 6th January. What we have seen this lockdown is a significant increase in the number of children in school (10 times as many as March/April 2020 and 40 more children than when restrictions were relaxed in June 2020). The reason that places in school have been limited to critical key workers is because transmission rates are extremely high across the country, and are increasing rapidly (this is also the case for Doncaster), and the new variant of the virus is 50-70% more transmissible than the one we were facing last March. The guidance document for schools' states:

We have resisted restrictions on attendance at schools since the first lockdown but, in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible.

In order to reassure staff and parents/carers who are critical workers and have no other choice than to send children to school, we have tried to keep our bubble numbers as small as possible - in line with our risk assessment. However, we are seeing increasing numbers of requests for places for children in school each day. The more children we have in school, the more staff we need to have on site and the more likely it is that COVID will spread and bubbles will need to close, meaning front line critical workers will not be able to go to work. The guidance for schools also states that ***'The majority of children and young people have no symptoms or very mild illness only.'*** Unfortunately, what this means for us as a school is that COVID could be spreading through a bubble without us knowing and could therefore affect the families of everyone in that bubble.

On Friday night, the government changed the guidance for schools again and it now states that:

Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can

This statement makes it quite clear that if you are able to keep children at home, even as a key worker, you should be doing so. Whilst we appreciate that it is difficult to work from home with young children in the house, we must remember that we are in the midst of a global pandemic and safety must be the number one priority. We ask that if you are able to safely look after your child, then you do not send your child into school. We would also like to ask that if your child currently has a place but you feel that under the new guidance they can safely be cared for at home, please contact the school office as soon as you can.

For those parents who are considering requesting a place for their child at school, we ask that you only apply if your child cannot be safely cared for at home and only for the days/times where you are at work. Please be aware that places are limited and have been capped and so you may be added to a waiting list. We always want to support our parents whose roles are critical to the fight against COVID; however, we are concerned by the increasing numbers attending school and the risk posed to our staff, our families and the community.

Thank you again for all of your support and for all of the lovely emails we are receiving - they give a real boost to staff in school who are working so hard.

Stay safe.

Mrs Walker
(Acting Headteacher)

