

Your ref:

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Date: 8th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As you know on Monday 4 January, the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, which has now come into effect. As part of this announcement it was made clear that vulnerable children and children of critical workers would be able to send their child to school if they need to.

It is clear, nationally and locally that this has been a real challenge this week. Schools have had a lot more children coming to school than happened in the Spring lockdown. Also, the definition of who is considered vulnerable by the Department for Education has been expanded which also creates extra pressure on schools.

Headteachers and school staff really want to accommodate every child, but sadly this just isn't possible in the light of the new Covid regulations. They are currently operating socially distanced teaching and learning, with enhanced safety procedures, reduced staffing capacity due to sickness and/or isolation and additional responsibilities such as implementing testing, managing remote learning and contact tracing processes.

The latest Government guidance published on the 7 January says: 'Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can'.

To try and support as many pupils and parents as possible, we are asking critical workers to think very carefully before sending your child to school. If you are able to keep your children at home, then please do so. We appreciate this is difficult and the work you do is critical to the Coronavirus response however, schools that find themselves at capacity will prioritise the following vulnerable children before critical workers:

- Children or young people with a Child Protection Plan, Looked After Children and children with Education, Health and Care Plans
- Children previously on a Child Protection Plan or previously Looked After

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- Those with a special guardianship order
- Children with a Child in Need Plan

This doesn't mean there isn't a place for your child if you are a critical worker, schools will of course do everything they can to support critical workers, it is just that this simply may not be possible. Each school's capacity to take children will vary and will change on a day to day basis depending on availability of staff and the number of children attending. Please help by only requesting a place if you really need it.

The current guidance for children and young people who are deemed clinically extremely vulnerable is not to attend their school setting and to remain at home as much as possible. If your child is within this category, please liaise with your school who will continue to support you.

All children not attending school will be supported to remain at home through remote learning.

Remote learning

Parents should expect a sliding scale of contact time for pupils from two hours for very young pupils to up to five hours for older pupils, although not all of this will be in a 'live' teaching environment. Schools may, as part of their remote learning provision:

- provide live teaching
- access some of the national provision (Such as Oak academy)
- provide recorded lessons
- set aside time for individual pupils or assignments.

All of the above learning activities are valid as long as they fit with the learning schemes the school is seeking to follow.

If you have any concerns about your child's access to ICT, or the remote learning content, we encourage you to discuss this with your Headteacher in the first instance.

Finally

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for all parents, particularly critical workers and would take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of Central Bedfordshire's schools and teachers.

It is important that you keep in touch with your child's school if you have any concerns – they are still here to help you. Together we all play our part to protect ourselves, those around us, protect the NHS and save lives.

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Yours sincerely

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