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www.hirstwoodnsc.co.uk

Headteacher: Mrs S J Taylor



6th January 2021

Dear Parent / carer

Re: HIRST WOOD NURSERY SCHOOL

Following the government announcement on Monday 4th January we have made the very difficult decision **NOT** to open our School to the wider community at the moment. It is our intention to remain open to the children of critical workers **ONLY**.

The definition of Critical Workers now includes:

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services
- Local and national government workers
- Food and necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport and borders
- Utilities, communication and financial services

Children with at least one parent or carer who is listed as a critical worker are eligible for a school place where a parent requests this. Please note that it is **not** necessary for both parents to be critical workers.

The details can be found here:

[Critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/critical-workers)
(www.gov.uk)

If you are a critical worker and do not wish for your child to attend, we would be grateful if you could inform us. For safeguarding reasons if your child is absent, please ring us on 01274 584368 to advise on the first day. If we do not hear from you, we will contact you to check why your child is not present.

Remote learning

The learning portal will continue to be updated weekly with a wide range of resources and learning for you to do at home. Everyone has received their log in details to the portal, however if you need a reminder of these, please email office@hirstwoodnsc.co.uk.

Free school meals

For families who are not attending School we will provide vouchers until we have sight of the updated guidance which is not yet available. We have a list of all those who are eligible for free school meals, however if you are experiencing financial hardship which may result in you needing additional support, please email Jayne.taylor@hirstwoodnsc.co.uk and we will offer as much support as we can. We do not want any children to go hungry.

Decision rationale

This has been a carefully considered decision, following a rigorous review of our risk assessment and the scientific advice presented to the government by the SAGE committee. We have a strong commitment to our children, colleagues and your families and therefore we do not feel that it is the right decision to open to all children at the moment.

There are various contributory factors that have influenced our decision and these are

SAGE Committee advice to the government in December was that schools should not open in January¹ other than for children of key workers and vulnerable children. This is because the scientific advice is that it is not safe for schools to open.

There are new variants of Covid-19 that are highly infectious and infection rates have increased significantly. We have experience of this in our own School as since we returned to School in September we did not have any positive cases until week 14 (the penultimate week of term) when 4 members of staff in one bubble tested positive.

The local public health information is that Shipley has a higher incidence of positive cases than some areas of the city and we know that this new variant is up to 70% more contagious.

Coronavirus infection is potentially fatal and has already resulted in more than 76,305 deaths in the UK with a significant up surge in recent weeks (data from 5.1.21)

The Union advice to colleagues is that they should not be at work and should apply the health and safety legislation contained with the following acts

- Sections 2 and 3 of the Health & Safety Act 1974
- Regulations 3 and 8 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Regulation 4 of the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- Regulation 4 of the Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Regulation 7 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

and agree to attend School only to work with critical worker and vulnerable children. This would result in staff shortages and an inability to meet statutory adult to child ratios. This could mean that we could see School closure on a daily basis, at very short notice, which is unfair to you as parents meaning that you cannot adequately plan.

Communication

We will be contacting each and every family via telephone next week so please let us know if there is anything that you feel you need from us and we will do our very best to help.

We have our parental consultations planned for next month which will go ahead. You will receive details of the date and time of your telephone appointment in due course.

Our website has the Covid 19 section, this is where updates will be shared.

We will continue to use the Textround service for any urgent messages. Please let us know if you are not receiving texts, or if you have changed your mobile telephone number.

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948606/s0991-sage-meeting-74-covid-19.pdf

We hope that you will support us in our endeavours to keep everyone safe. We understand that this may be disappointing to you and your children. We recognise and acknowledge these emotions, we too wish to get back to business as usual and are missing the children and families. As always, please get in touch if you need anything, we continue to be here to support you in any way that we can. We wish you a belated happy and healthy new year.

We will closely observe the ever-changing situation and will review our position as more information is available for us to reflect on. We will, of course, maintain regular communication with you and ask you to be patient with us, we are trying to do our very best to support everyone and keep our community safe.

Kind regards

Jayne Taylor
Headteacher

Jayne Taylor

Lucy Mairs
Chair of Governors

Lucy Mairs

