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Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your children are well and are managing to adjust to lock-down and learning from home. I'd like to update you with what has been happening since closure was announced last week.

Allocation of School Places during closure period

As you know vulnerable children and the children of parents who are critical workers (*parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response including those in health and social care*) can attend school. We had many requests for places and immediately prioritised vulnerable children and families where both parents were critical workers (or single parent families). Since then, the government has confirmed that only one parent need be a critical worker and that there should be no limit on places.

Given the nature of the virus and particularly given the transmissibility of the new variant, the school and Victoria Academies Trust have agreed that we cannot work safely without limits on numbers – unlimited numbers would seem to contradict the reason for closing in the first place and compromise the safety of the children and teachers remaining in our school. Therefore, there is now a maximum of 10 children per classroom bubble which enables some social distancing to take place where children are old enough to comply with this.

We are currently able to accommodate all critical worker parents who are unable to keep children at home, however, we have now introduced a priority order that will be used going forwards should any more parents request places. This is included in the updated risk assessment on the website

<https://northfieldmanoracademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NMPA-Covid-19-Risk-Assessment-January-2021.pdf>

and is as follows:

If there are too many parents requesting places for pupils than the school can accommodate the following admissions priority list should be used:

- 1. Registered existing vulnerable children - as per government guidance definition*
- 2. Two parents (or one for single parent families) who are Health & social care; Education and Childcare; Key public service sector workers critical workers or working on EU transition. Only for the days when they are working and supported by a letter from their employer*
- 3. One critical worker parent (for two parent families) - same conditions as point 2*
- 4. Two parents (or one for single parent families) who are in any of the other categories on the government guidance. Only for the days when they are working and supported by a letter from their employer.*
- 5. One critical worker parent (for two parent families) who are in any of the other categories on the government guidance. Only for the days when they are working and supported by a letter from their employer.*
- 6. Additional vulnerable children (at the head's discretion).*

If the school cannot accommodate all requested places, a place will be sought at one of the other schools within the Trust.

Government advice to all parents – including critical workers - is to keep children at home if you can.

Remote and In-School Learning

Now that we have about one third of the school learning from the classroom and two-thirds learning from home, we are adjusting staffing so that teachers are able to balance high-quality learning for both groups. Each year group has an allocation of 4 staff: 2 teaching assistants, and 2 teachers. These are the teachers they already know, and this is the case with most teaching assistants too. Each class bubble of 10 children (or less) will be supported by a teaching assistant or higher-level teaching assistant every day when in school. The year group teachers will rotate so that they are in school for one week and working remotely the following week. This will enable the teacher in school to oversee teacher assistant supervision. It will also enable both teachers to manage their workloads so that they are able to remain in daily contact with all children as well as plan and respond to pupil work, record videos, and maintain contact through class dojo, phone and Zoom where appropriate. We will continue to improve remote learning – it's essential we make this as good as it can be, so we appreciate your feedback as we do this.

IT

We know that some of our families find that barriers to home learning include lack of internet and suitable devices for children to access the internet through. We have now been allocated a set of laptops by the DfE to be loaned by those in need. If you have not done so, please complete the IT survey sent to you last week. Even if you have got what you need, we would appreciate a return on the survey so that we can discount you from our list. Here is the link if you haven't completed it already <https://forms.gle/yEtDnNDFzLatNrpu9>

Free School Meals Food Parcels

I know that some of you will have seen the concerning pictures of substandard and inadequate free school meals parcels over the last few days on Facebook and Twitter. I would like to reassure you that as a school we are following government guidance regarding nutritional content and we are also ensuring that the children receive at least the full amount allocated by the government. There will be a resumption of government food vouchers (which replace parcels) in the next few weeks.

Breakfast and After-School Clubs (paid for wrap-around care)

Unfortunately, we are unable to staff these currently. It will be kept under review and we will reopen as soon as we are able to.

I know that this is a very difficult time for everyone. We are certainly concerned that children will be losing yet more school time. Please do your best to oversee and support your child's learning and contact us in the usual way should you need any help or advice.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Pennington

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