

ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

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22nd March 2020

Dear Parents,

Ref: Emergency Support for Children of Key Workers in Primary School

You may be aware that schools **have been asked** to be available to open with skeleton staff to support identified Key Workers. I, like all the staff of St Mary's greatly admire and appreciate the NHS and its workers. Please be aware however, that schools have received very little guidance, training, support or resources and are now being expected to provide care for children as the virus spreads. The school has **no access to, nor have we been provided with protective clothing, training nor medical advice.** Up until this point staff have been more than happy to plan and work to help children, but now **there is widespread and grave concern about the safety of staff, pupils, associated families and the wider community if school is to reopen to even some children.** I want you to consider the message in this letter seriously before making a decision to apply for a place.

Many schools are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time. Schools will **not be able to operate a 'normal' school day.** Please pay particular attention to the following points

Points to consider:

- Children and their families are safest at home.
- Because places are very limited they are only available to children of parents who are **both** keyworkers and **both working at the same time.**
- All alternative childcare arrangements **should be exhausted** before applying for an emergency place. For example, other family members, friends, students who are off college etc. **Schools should be used as a last resort.** This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance. While we acknowledge that families may well move in closer proximity and are all likely to have a similar infection risk, **it seems very unlikely that a group of children could be kept at least 2 metres apart at all times in a school environment.**
- Children in families with any member identified in a higher risk group should **NOT** apply for a place.
- If you work part time, you must only use the service for the hours you need.
- If you are able to work from home to accommodate this situation, please do so.
- Hours available 9a.m.-3p.m.
- The facility being offered is child-care. Remote teaching will be carried out online as already planned, available for all to access at home.

I would ask that you pay attention to the points outlined above and consider carefully the risks before deciding

to apply for emergency cover at school. If your **only option** is school, we will risk assess further and do what is reasonable to accommodate this.

As you are all aware the children are at the centre of every decision we make. It would seem that schools, like many at present, have been put in a very difficult. There is great concern about bringing a group of children and staff to school given the advice from PHA. No-one wants to spread the virus in our local community, given how contagious and serious this pandemic is.

If you wish to apply for emergency cover, please email info@stmarysntb.newtownbutler.ni.sch.uk before 12 noon on Monday 23rd March. A further risk assessment will be carried out and a decision will be made regarding what is feasible to offer and a possible start date for this care to be offered.

With regards,

Mrs P Kelly
Principal