



Long Lane Primary School

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Sunday 3rd January 2021

Advance Notice of Closure and Support for Critical workers

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, we would just like to wish everyone a truly Happy New Year and hope you all managed to have a restful and joyful Christmas. The last-minute government changes will have dampened down your celebrations which may have looked somewhat different compared to those which were originally planned. The reward of being able to see and be with our loved ones was taken away by the necessity to put safety over joy, once again. We empathise with how bitter a taste this leaves considering the circumstances we now find ourselves in again.

You will no doubt have heard or seen the news about the concerns over schools re-opening. We are in a very similar situation to the one that we had in March and in June with very late notice coming out to schools in order for us to keep you informed. Whilst Long Lane Primary is not in one of the London boroughs being asked to close all schools, we have our own not so unique situation which I will explain.

We have had to make the decision to NOT open to all children as planned on Tuesday but instead open just to vulnerable children and to those children from families who are critical workers. The return for these children will continue to be on **Tuesday 5th January** (see below for more details).

The decision we have taken is to do with staff safety and not about staff not wanting the children to return. As a school we had to look at the staff we have available and also at our risk assessment before deciding what level of care and supervision we could offer. At this moment we cannot offer the correct levels of supervision.

The government have repeatedly said that it is safe for schools to open but they are largely meaning it is safe for the children - not detailing the safety of the staff. We at Long Lane Primary really did put everything in place last term to mitigate any spreading of the virus and were exceptionally lucky to have no direct cases amongst staff or children. With the arrival of a new strain of the virus we may not be as lucky.

West Berkshire was in the bottom 10 counties for most of the year. However, infection rates doubled (from 200 to 400) in a week just before Christmas, the new variant seems to be transmitted even more easily in the air and we don't really know what is safe at this point in time. So, we have to exercise as much caution as possible for the sake of ourselves, our families and the communities in which we live.

We do of course realise that this decision will cause childcare problems for those of you who are unable to work from home. For those of you who are able to do this, it will still be difficult as home learning is not easy for anyone! We have however made the decision to hopefully make it easier for you by ensuring that there will be more elements of remote contact. Before Christmas you will have received details of the Microsoft Teams account set-up for your child and suite of programmes and apps.

Teachers will take a 'register' close to the beginning and end of each day of the children present and we will be chasing up those who are not seen to find out if it is a connection or a motivation problem! You will need your child to be in a communal room in the house (with an adult present as much as possible) for safeguarding purposes – more details about remote learning to follow.

Critical workers

Please can I ask that you to inform us via covid@longlane.w-berks.sch.uk if you think you **continue to be in this category** and therefore need to send your child(ren) to school. Once agreed we will be giving 'permission' for those to attend - no children will be allowed to attend without this permission, sorry. Children with an EHCP (but not siblings), Looked After Children or those deemed vulnerable, i.e having a need through Children's Services, will also be eligible for in-school provision.

More details and the criteria can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

This is not the message we wanted to be sending you on the Sunday evening just before we are meant to be starting back at school next week, but we wanted to try and give you as much notice as possible to try and make arrangements.

We will continue to communicate with you regularly in the coming days but anticipate this to be in place until at least Friday 16th January. Thank you for your support and for your patience in the meantime.

Your sincerely,



Mr P Thorne
Headteacher

Mrs J Folliard
Co-Chair of Governors

Mr S Bamford