



# Flanderwell Primary School

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*"Every child, every minute, every hope."*



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Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to provide you with an update you since my last communication on Friday. School is open as usual for now for all children, but I want to give you clarification about the current debate and concerns in education behind the scenes (which you will have heard about through the media), how this could potentially affect the school's ability to remain open in the short term and what we would do if this were to happen. ***I stress again, that at the time of writing, we remain open to all pupils.***

I have met today with a group of Trust heads to discuss our risk assessments and the current situation. Within our local area, the number of people with Covid and the number of 5-9 year olds with Covid is much lower than it was in November. The spread of the new variant in Yorkshire is also relatively low and currently accounts for 10-15% of cases. We believe, as a Trust, that the risk assessments we have put in place in school and which were in place in November when transmission was higher, are still appropriate.

### **Current debate and concerns:**

The background: Infection rates are rising nationally and there is uncertainty about whether or not the new Covid variant is easily transmissible in children. SAGE are advising schools move to online teaching temporarily, and the government have made this decision for some schools already. At the time of writing, there have been no government directives for further schools to move to online teaching.

In the last few days, both teacher unions and support staff unions have written to members to say that there should be a consistent approach across the country and have told staff that they have a statutory right under health and safety legislation to refuse to attend workplaces they consider to be unsafe (section 44 and 100 Employment rights Act 1996). Employers have a legal duty to ensure staff are safe, and the unions are arguing that government hasn't provided us with the sufficient ability to make this decision.

### **How could this impact on school's ability to stay open for all pupils?**

There is a possibility that, if staff invoke their statutory right to refuse to attend the workplace, they consider to be unsafe, school could find itself in a position whereby we would have to temporarily move learning online because we would not have a safe ratio of adults to pupils to remain open. We will keep you informed if it is looking likely.

There is also a possibility that, if infection rates rise in our area, the government could request that we temporarily move learning online (this is not the case at the time of writing).

### **What are we planning as a school if we are required to close temporarily in the future?**

- Teaching would move online for pupils at home, as happens in a bubble closure. Teaching would be face to face virtually, with lessons throughout the day as a class with the class teacher. This has worked well when we have had bubble closures.
- School would be open for key workers and vulnerable pupils (those with an Education and Health Care Plan or with a social worker). As teachers cannot run both online teaching for pupils at home and key worker provision in school, this provision will be run by our teaching assistants under the direction of teachers. It is only right and fair that those children who were at home in the first lockdown and missed out on face-to-face teaching have access this time to teachers.
- In order to access key worker provision, you will need to submit an application form if you believe you are in an eligible profession (the application form will be attached along with this letter). The application form requests contact details for your employers, so that school can confirm that you are eligible for a place (we would expect that, where there are two parents, both attend a workplace).

I hope that this letter has helped you all understand the potential action that may take place. Please contact us with any further questions you may have.

We all believe that the best place for children to be is in school, and we understand and sympathise with the challenges that potential closure place on our working families. The information in this letter may never be needed and we may find that we are not asked to close or are not in a position to need to close due to staffing levels, but we wanted to keep you as well informed as possible.

Thank you all again for your continued support in these challenging times for us all.

Kind regards,

Mrs J Armitage  
Headteacher