

7th January 2021

Ref: Procedure for Key Workers and Parents of Vulnerable Children in Primary School

Dear Parents/Carers,

The recent medical advice on how to reduce the risk of and limit the spread of Covid-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

As indicated by the Minister, schools will be open to those key workers and vulnerable children where they cannot find an alternative and have exhausted ALL other options for their child's care.

While we recognise that the criteria for keyworkers and vulnerable children is quite wide, DE acknowledge that it's not safe to have large numbers of children mixing together within a school setting and parents should only send children to school if you have exhausted all other alternatives. Schools will have a limited capacity due to social distancing regulations and a reduced workforce.

With this in mind, before you apply for a school place for your child (ren) please consider:

- 1) Your work role, days and hours of supervision required
- 2) Do you have a partner, another non-vulnerable family member or non-vulnerable safe and trusted friend who can look after your child?
- 3) Your partner or family member is working from home and is therefore considered to be able to provide childcare. Or you can re-arrange work patterns to have one parent at home, while the other partner attends work where possible.
- 4) Other childcare provided within the community.

If you can make any alternative arrangements, we would ask that you consider doing so. This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance. We are doing our best to ensure that the limited places in school are kept available for key workers and vulnerable children who really need them as emergency care and school is a last resort. Children are eligible for supervision only on the days that a parent is attending work as a keyworker with children being looked after from home on the days that a parent is not working.

Refer to the attached list of specific job titles (see Appendix One) within each sector to check if you are:

- A single parent identified as a key worker. In single families, the individual parent must be the Key Worker.
- One parent identified as a key worker. One parent might be at home during school hours on various days.

- Both parents identified as key workers. If both parents are key workers, consider your roles, days and hours of work pattern. One parent might be at home during school hours on various days.
- Children with both parents working as key workers and both parents out at work at the same time should consider attending school after having exhausted all other options.

We all have a duty to each other to use this facility responsibly. If the demand for places at school exceeds the available capacity governors may require further information about your role as a key worker in order to apply criteria to those in most need. Governors will use the list included on the next page, in rank order (as stipulated by the Department of Education) to prioritise need.

Our school will provide this facility:

Nursery: Usual nursery times apply 9.00-11.30am or 12.30-3.00pm. Nursery children will be in a bubble with P1 children.

P1&2: 9.00-2.00pm.

P3-7: 9.00-2.50pm.

- **Please note that home to school transport will run as normal.**
- **Free school meals payments are made directly to parents, the EA have confirmed that school canteens will not be open, children are advised to bring a packed lunch and bottle of water every day.**
- **Children need to bring their Learning Pack for that week with them every day that they attend for supervised learning.**

Please use the 'Covid-19 Declaration Form' available in the Parents' Area of the Oakgrove IPSN App to make an expression of interest for your child/ren to attend. All forms must be submitted via the school app before 12noon each Thursday for the week ahead. Parents will receive a text message to confirm places every Friday for the week ahead.

Children who qualify within these categories will be in school for 'supervised learning' not face to face teaching covering the same activities as the children who are at home. It may not be your child's year group teacher or classroom assistant working on a particular day as staff are on duty following a rota system while also supporting and managing learning daily through class SeeSaw.

We would ask that you pay attention to the above points before applying for a place for your child/ren.

Yours sincerely,
A Donaghey
 Mrs A Donaghey

APPENDIX ONE:

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan>)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is 'on-the-edge' of receiving support from children's social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

Key workers are defined as:

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers, youth workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;

- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Case Scenarios for reference:

- **Case 1** - two parents who are not key workers - in this case parents must make arrangements for care of their children with non-vulnerable friends or relatives and where this is not possible, one parent must stay at home to look after their children. This will ensure that the limited places in school are kept available for key workers who really need them as emergency care and school is a last resort.
- **Case 2** - two parents, one of whom is a key worker - **this is no different to the case above** - parents must make arrangements for care of their children with non-vulnerable friends or relatives. This will ensure that the limited places in school are kept available for key workers who really need them as emergency care and school is a last resort.
- **Case 3** - two parents, both of whom are key workers - parents must make arrangements for care of their children with non-vulnerable friends or relatives and only where this is not possible, schools should provide care for their children on the days that both parents are both working at the same time (it may be possible to re-arrange work patterns and rotas to accommodate childcare) and **where it is safe and secure do so.**
- **Case 4** - single parent key worker - the parent must make arrangements for care of his / her children with non-vulnerable friends or relatives and only where this is not possible, schools should provide care for their children only on the days when the parent is attending work and **where it is safe and secure to do so.**