

Ballymacrickett Primary School and Nursery Unit



Lisburn Association of Principals

20th March 2020

Dear Parents,

You will no doubt be very aware of the information released by the Education Minister yesterday evening. In essence, this confirmed the closure of all schools on Friday 20th March, but with skeleton staff being available on Monday 23rd March to support identified Key Workers. This announcement was then followed by a letter to Principals in which the extensive list of key workers was highlighted.

As part of a national response, and as a group of local Principals, we are pastorally keen to support the Minister's request. However, this has been initiated with such haste, that we must consider carefully the potential implications of such an extensive list and ensure that appropriate steps are put in place to manage this request effectively. This letter is the collective response of the Lisburn Association of Principals as we try to manage this unfolding situation with as much consistency as possible.

It is worth bearing in mind that we have been instructed to close to minimise the risk of infection transfer at a time of national and global crisis. It is essential, therefore, that we are still able to comply with this ultimate reason for closure. Consequently, we will only be able to offer places for childcare based on capacity. To inform that decision, we need to be able to manage who can access the care, otherwise the original reason for closure of schools becomes meaningless. In practice, this may mean we are not able to safely provide the offer of childcare from Monday morning, but may need a few days to organise the provision, and ensure sufficient staffing and safeguarding measures. We may also need to consider offering places to a smaller group, where the need is most urgent.

Once key information has been gathered and decisions made, only families with an offer of a place should attend the school, and they should only do so when directed to by the school. It could potentially be impossible to accept the number of families who may apply for such provision, given the extensive nature of the Minister's key worker list.

To support us and help us inevitably to support those most in need and yet still safeguard appropriately, we request that, if you request this provision, you contact the school with the information required in the form below. Before doing so, please consider the current guidance. Please be aware, guidance may alter later today if we receive more specific updates from the Education Minister.

Points to Consider

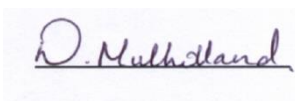
- A list of key workers, issued by the Department of Education is listed below. Only children with BOTH parents working as key workers, and both parents out at work at the same time, should consider attending school.
- In single parent families, the main carer MUST be a key worker.
- If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child to school, for example, with other family members, friends etc.

- Please try and use schools 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.
- Initially, schools will not have wraparound services available. Each school's normal opening and closing time will apply. For example, 9am –2pm, 9am –3pm.
- Children attending will be required to wear their school uniform.
- Whilst teaching opportunities may be taken where possible, schools will largely be performing childcare duties as not all teachers are currently available to teach specific year groups; teachers are also providing home learning at the same time, which involves considerable planning. Children will need to bring their home learning packs with them.

There are currently discussions around how lunch would be provided during the closure period for children entitled to Free School Meals. As yet, there is no clear guidance on this, but once we are notified, we will inform you accordingly.

Thank you for your understanding as we endeavour to work in partnership, but also safeguard the needs of our respective school communities. We are deeply grateful for the diligence, compassion and expertise of vital key workers and are mindful that many of you are under extreme pressure at this time. Please be assured you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours faithfully,



(As a member of Lisburn Association of Principals)

Key Worker List as identified by the Education Minister:

Education and childcare. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social 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, services and waste disposal.
- 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.)
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services.
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

APPLICATION FOR CHILDCARE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF KEY WORKERS

Please email your response to dmulholland819@c2kni.net by 5:00 pm Saturday 21st March, with the following information included:

Children's Names: _____

KEY WORKER ROLES

Parent One – Name and Role: _____

Parent Two – Name and Role: _____

Alternatively, please confirm your key worker role as a single parent – Name and Role:

If possible, please note any particular considerations the school should be aware of if we are in a position where we need to manage who can access this offer of childcare support.

We STRONGLY underline the fact that, given the timeframe, this provision will not be in place for Monday 23rd March. Please provide us with up-to-date contact details, particularly if grandparents can no longer be listed as one of the priority contacts during this period.

Contact Details: _____

