

20th March 2020 Update

Coronavirus - COVID-19 - Information for members of our school community including parents, carers and staff

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware from the recent press coverage and our previous communications, schools will close at the end of today until further notice for the vast majority of our children. The Secretary of State, Gavin Williamson has asked schools to remain open to provide care for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, we will be working hard to provide this support for our families.

Access to 'Reduced Provision' from Monday 23rd March in our schools:

Yesterday evening, the government published a list of who is considered to fall within the category of 'key worker'. We currently understand this to include: Health and social care, Education and childcare, Key public services, Local and national government, Food and other necessary goods, Public safety and national security, Transport, Utilities, Communications and financial services. Please see the government guidance [here](#).

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

The advice is still to stay at home wherever possible, to reduce the risk of spreading this virus.

We put out an online parent form for each of the schools to send to you yesterday. We have already had nearly 600 responses, thank you to those of you who have had time to fill it in. We will continue to collate responses over the weekend. We would particularly urge those of you who will need childcare to fill in the form. So far, we will need places for 150+ children. Thank you for all your encouraging comments for staff during a taxing time. Head teachers will respond back to those of you who have indicated you need additional support.

Places will be prioritised for families where **both** parents are key workers or where a **sole** parent is a key worker but depending on numbers, we may be able to offer some level of flexibility around this for families with at least one parent working in these key sectors. Whilst the government has asked schools to open, it is intended only for small groups to reduce the spread of the virus, please only ask if your work falls into the key worker group and you need the support. We will be organising staff rotas next week to take us through the Easter Holiday. More details to follow.

Head teachers will also be contacting some other parents within our school communities to offer a small number of additional places for children in our reduced provision. This will include children who have Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

Free School Meals

Over this period, we will endeavour to continue to provide all children who are eligible with a free school meal. Some school kitchens we run ourselves and some are run by Caterlink. Where we can, we will feed children who attend reduced provision with a hot meal, however this may not be possible in all schools due to staff availability, in this instance we will ensure a packed lunch is provided. We have also agreed to provide packed lunches for all children who normally access a free school meal, and these can be collected from your child's school office between 11.00am and 12.30pm. Parents must either call the school or email the secretary before 9.30am if they wish to collect a packed lunch for that day. We will continue to monitor provision daily and provide further advice should we need to amend arrangements.

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Home Learning

As specified in my last communication, during term time, teachers will be uploading age appropriate learning for children to complete via class pages on the school websites (if you are unable to access this information digitally, please collect a printed copy from the school office)

You can expect pages to be updated weekly. Teachers will be sharing ideas with each other across the Trust, to provide adequate resources for your children.

Accessing additional support

We understand that this situation will be a challenging one for many families. In the near future we will ensure our school websites include a page which will signpost sources of advice and support. If you are finding your circumstances particularly challenging can we please suggest you contact the head teacher at your child's school or other professionals currently working with your family. We need to get through this together.

Further advice and guidance

Due to the rapidly moving nature of events we strongly urge you to follow the government's latest guidance for information and advice accessed [here](#). We are practising social distancing where we can in schools and any staff or children who display symptoms should self-isolate.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

If you are worried about your symptoms or those of a child, please use the NHS 111 online service (or telephone service if you do not have online access).

Keeping in touch

It is vital that we continue to keep in touch over these coming weeks. Your school website is your first port of call, but we may also use the Arbor Parent Portal, texts or phone calls where appropriate. Please ensure the school have your most up to date contact details.

Our staff will continue to work over this challenging period. If you have any questions or queries, please contact your child's school in the first instance. You are also welcome to contact me or the Central Team through our enquiries@bridgeschools.co.uk email address. We are in daily contact with all of our schools, offering advice and support, ensuring schools are adequately staffed and taking care of letters and coordinating the response. We are blessed with an excellent staff team of over 400 people out in the schools and a small team in the Central Office.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support through these very challenging times. Stay safe and stay well.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Massey