

Langar C of E Primary School

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Head Teacher
Mrs E J Brown

Dear Parents,

It was lovely to receive so many positive messages of support and understanding following our appearance on East Midlands Today on Friday. It was exciting and slightly nerve wracking to be asked to talk about a situation that is representative of schools throughout the country. As you can imagine, there were many parts of the interview that were cut and I wanted to share with you a wider context so that you have some further understanding of the current 'school closure'. I am going to address some of the questions that I imagine you have.

Why are some children in school when schools are closed?

On Friday 8th January schools were sent guidance about children who were able to access a place in school. The guidance opened with the following statement: *Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 4 January 2021, only children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people should attend school or college. All other pupils and students will receive remote education.* The list of critical workers was quite extensive and stated that, 'parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the following sections. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.' Children deemed as vulnerable are also being welcomed into school and again the definition of this is quite broad and includes children who may have an unstable or unsafe home setting, young carers and children who are known to social care.

How did you choose which children could come to school?

Guided by our values of fairness and respect, we invited the parents of children who fell into any of the categories to make themselves known and ask for a place for their child. This was done with a level of trust and the hope for honesty. Parents were asked to state their role, where it fitted into the list of critical workers and the name and contact details of their employer. All the applications we received met the criteria as stated in the guidance. Vulnerable children have been dealt with sensitively and parents approached and invited to send their children in.

Some parents work shifts or part-time, why are their children in every day?

In order to create consistent bubbles and maintain minimal contact between staff and families, we asked parents to commit to bringing children for the usual school hours (8.40am till 3.20pm), five days a week. This was to cause less emotional disruption for children and ensure staff can support them to access the remote learning we provide.

How many Key Worker and vulnerable children are there in school and what does provision for them look like?

We currently have 27 out of our usual 92 children in school – this is 30% of the number of children normally in school. These have been split into small groups (reception/year 1, year 2, year 3/4 and year 5/6) and each is led by one of our teaching assistants. The children in school are completing exactly the same tasks and activities

that are being accessed by the children at home. Teachers are all in school setting and responding to remote learning, holding Zoom meetings and carrying out wellbeing checks for vulnerable children who are not in school.

How does the number of children in school compare with the rest of the country?

In a recent survey of 105 head teachers, it was found that:

14% of schools have between **0 - 20% of children in**

32% of schools have between **21 - 30% of children in**

36% of schools have between **31 - 40% of children in**

14% of schools have between **41 - 50% of children in**

4% of schools have **over 51% of children in**

I am a critical worker and didn't apply for a place for my child, is it too late?

No. You are very welcome to ask for a place for your child if you fall into any of the categories mentioned. The measures taken of closing schools to most children were to lessen the contact being made between people. It is up to individual families to weigh up the consequences and risks of keeping children home or sending them into school. We can accept more children with the numbers of staff we have, spaces available to work in and the numbers of children currently attending, however, there may come a time when this is not possible and we will have to take action to slim numbers back.

What are the risks of having more children in school?

With more children in school, the number of children, families and staff in contact with each other increases. This could result in an outbreak of the virus that would spread further through the community than it would if there were less children in school. The likelihood of having to close bubbles due to positive cases is also heightened, resulting in the parents who are critical workers having to isolate for ten days, thus unable to fulfil their roles.

Home learning is a struggle for us as we are both working fulltime, but I am not a critical worker. This doesn't feel fair.

With so many places of work continuing to be open, less employers furloughing staff and those working from home expected to meet their usual targets and outcomes, it is no surprise that families are finding lockdown 3 a real challenge. We acknowledge this. We are all working to government rules, regulations and guidance, and with the purpose of this being to limit face to face contact with people this unfortunately also limits the support we can give you other than through the type of home learning we are providing.

I worry about the impact being away from school will have on my child. What if they fall behind their peers?

We are in very unusual and worrying times. The true impact of the pandemic will be felt in many areas of society for many years to come. The mental health and wellbeing of your children needs to be the foremost priority right now. Learning happens when children are well, feel stable, are happy, secure and know they are loved. After returning from the first school 'closures' the biggest impact was on children's mental health and behaviour. As a school, we ensured we healed these gaps before trying to close gaps in learning. When we return to full time education children will be measured from their starting points and their personal and learning needs will be catered for.

I work all day so I can't support my child's learning between 9.00 and 3.00.

Every family needs to find a way of balancing working and educating that works for them. We provide a structure for home learning that you are very welcome to adapt. If you need to alter the hours of learning, take breaks or adjust the activities then so be it. You are your child's primary carer; you know them the best. Some

children learn concepts very quickly, others need to revisit concepts in small chunks of time over and over again. In class we personalise our approaches minute by minute throughout a lesson with up to 30 children; have the confidence to personalise the learning for your child. We trust you, and the work and outcomes of learning we have seen so far have been wonderful. We believe the approach to remote learning we have taken provides the flexibility to undertake learning when it is appropriate for your family, and accommodates the many different family groups we have along with the varying amounts of technology and devices you have.

Finally

WE ARE NOT IN THE SAME BOAT
I heard that we are all in the same boat,
But it's not like that.
We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat.
Your ship could be shipwrecked and mine might not be.
Or vice versa.
For some, quarantine is optimal.
A moment of reflection, of re-connection, easy in flip flops, with a cocktail or coffee.
For others, this is a desperate financial and family crisis.
For some that live alone they're facing endless loneliness
While for others it is peace, rest and time with their mother, father, sons and daughters.
Some were concerned about getting a certain egg for Easter while others were concerned
if there would be enough bread, milk and eggs for the weekend.
Some want to go back to work because they don't qualify for unemployment and are
running out of money.
Others want to scream at those who break the quarantine.
Some are home spending hours a day helping their child with online schooling while
others are spending hours a day to educate their children on top of a 12 hour workday.
Some have experienced the near death of the virus, some have already lost someone from
it and some are not sure if their loved ones are going to make it.
Others don't believe this is a big deal.
Some have faith in God and expect miracles during this 2020. Others say the worst is
yet to come.
So, friends, we are not in the same boat. We are going through a time when our
perceptions and needs are completely different.
Each of us will emerge, in our own way, from this storm. It is very important to see
beyond what is seen at first glance.
Not just looking, actually seeing.
We are all on different ships during this storm experiencing a very different journey.
Let everyone navigate their route with respect, empathy and responsibility
Anonymous



Take care,

Mrs Brown