

Dear Parents and Carers,

31st December 2020

You may have been aware of recent guidance from Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary on 30th December 2020 regarding whether or not schools will be returning fully in January 2021. There has been further guidance for primary schools that are currently in Tier 4 with local case numbers rising significantly. As a school, we have devised a plan to ensure that your child and our community has as safe a return to school on 4th January as possible.

We recognise the anxieties parents have that are related to pupils returning to school and spreading the virus, in particular the new variant that is being widely spoken of. We also understand the pressures that people are under to return to work on January 4th 2021. Additionally, we know that there are vulnerable families out there who need our support both, academically and at home.

We have considered all these factors and with the support of the Local Authority, and Portico Multi-Academy Trust (Chair of Trustees, Mr Bob Hellen, and CEO, Mrs Cheryl Woolf), we will be starting the first week back with a blended learning approach.

This approach will mean the school will only be open to the children of Critical Key Workers and Vulnerable Children from Monday 4th January to Friday 8th January.

All other pupils will be asked to remain at home and access our remote learning through our educational platforms: Seesaw and Tapestry. We will also ask that you make use of the pack that we sent home during the Autumn term.

We will consider the national, regional and local information available to us in the week beginning 4th January and consider the options for school fully reopening on Monday 11th January.

This decision has been made in light of Southend being classified as a Tier 4 area and the increased number of reported cases locally. Schools in Southend have received confirmation from the Executive Director of Children and Public Health and the Director of Education and Early Years at Southend Local Authority of the significant increases in positive cases in school children (particularly with no symptoms) and staff and the likelihood of further escalation.

Return to School Survey

A survey will shortly be sent out to all those that have advised us they are critical workers and would most likely need school provision for their child. In order for us to plan effectively, please complete the form so that we can gauge numbers of pupils expected in school.

IF YOU RECEIVE THE PARENTMAIL FORM FOR CRITICAL KEY WORKERS PLEASE COMPLETE THIS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY. The form will close by 5pm today.



Testing

At this time, I would encourage you to follow advice from Public Health England and arrange a COVID 19 test from a local test centre before the start of term in preparation for a full school reopening. This is irrelevant of whether you or your child has symptoms. If you are a Critical Worker, or parent of a child returning to school on 4th January, please could you book the test 3 to 4 days before, as the turnaround time for tests is approximately 72 - 96 hours. If your child is returning to school later, as part of the staggered start, then we would encourage you to take the test with your child 3 to 4 days before the return to school. This testing is not a fool proof method, but will reduce the number of asymptomatic positive cases that are within the community and therefore reduce the risk of transmission occurring in school.

Timings

The school start and finish times will provide a 'window' to drop off your child from 8.30am until 9.00am and collection from 3.00pm until 3.20pm

Extended Services

Our Breakfast and After School Clubs **will not be able to run** during this first week.

I recognise that this change of provision may bring challenges, but during these unprecedented times, we are adapting to the situation to ensure your children, our staff and community remain as safe as possible.

At the time of releasing this letter and plan, following recent Government guidance, this information may be subject to change. If there is further National or Local Guidance to Primary Schools shared, we will review and amend our plan accordingly and let you know as soon as is practically possible.

Thank you, as always for your support and understanding as we make some very difficult decisions in very difficult circumstances. The messages of support that you send us are very much appreciated. Thank you.

If you have any concerns regarding this correspondence please do not hesitate in contacting the school office on: office@hamstel-inf.southend.sch.uk

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Clark
Head Teacher