



Archdiocese of Birmingham

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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20th March 2020

Dear Parent

At the time of writing and in light of the latest government guidance, 19th March 2020, in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic that is sweeping our country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of this virus. To this end, I wish to clarify our school's offer in response to the government's latest recommendations and we will contact parents directly if they are to be offered a place within this school offer.

"Schools are being asked to continue to provide care for a **limited number of children** - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. **Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home.** And every child who can be safely cared for at home **should be.**

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
4. **Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus.** They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults."

On MONDAY 23rd March and TUESDAY 24th March we are closed to ALL children in order to organise ourselves and how this will work for our staff and children. We will begin our deep clean on these two days. This will result in sections of our school being closed off and not re-opened until we return in full. With this in mind and as per the government guidance, we are offering a limited number of places per day – "scientific advice shows that these settings are safe for a small number of children to continue attending." With this in mind we will be forced to prioritise those children who "absolutely need" to be supervised/cared for and we will contact relevant parents directly.

We are confident, for instance, that our educational colleagues will be able to care for their own children in their own educational settings as set out in Birmingham City Council's latest guidance.

Our Care Offer

At St Mary's our plan is to provide the following:

- Observe normal school hours (8.30am – 3.30pm) – we are currently liaising with Kidz.comm regarding any potential offer they can make;
- Care provided for mixed age groups – not necessarily by teachers (see Children Learning at Home);

- Staff will be timetabled to supervise these groups. The curriculum will not be taught as the primary objective is care, not education and the government has been very clear on this;
- Teaching staff will be focusing on teaching their pupils remotely via the e-schools platform;
- We can provide meals for the children we offer places to – this will be administered via the Gateway as usual.

Maintaining our Offer:

As many organisations are experiencing, we too have been faced with staff with fevers and partners/family members who are symptomatic and therefore self-isolating. We currently have ten staff who fall into this category and cannot yet be part of the care offer above. Should our staffing levels reduce to a critical amount we will be forced to withdraw our care offer for periods of time.

Children Learning at Home:

The vast majority of our pupil population will be cared for and be learning at home. Our class teachers will be focusing on the continued education of these children via remote teaching and learning.

Staff are preparing the weekly learning content and this will be available on e-schools every Wednesday from 10.00am. Children have all received their logins for this purpose.

Parents and children will be able to directly communicate with their class teacher on this platform regarding the learning that has been provided.

If you do not have internet access, please inform the school office.

As outlined in our rationale, parents of children who will be offered a place within our reduced provision will be contacted directly. If you are not contacted by Monday at midday, this means that we are unable to offer a place for your child/children. **Children without an offer WILL NOT be admitted.**

I trust this clarifies the situation of what we, at St Mary's, are offering at this time of crisis. This is indeed a critical time for all of our families and we will do all we can to reduce the spread of the virus. We extend our sincere thanks to those on the frontline and pray that they continue in good health to continue keeping us all safe.

May I remind all our children to say our school prayer every day invoking our Blessed Mother's protection as we, in school, will continue to pray for you all daily.

God bless,



Helena Cusack
Headteacher