

ABBOT'S LEA SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mrs Ania Hildrey, M.Ed, B.Ed(Hons), NPQH



5 January 2021

Dear Families

Ref: Abbot's Lea School plans for Term 3

Following last night's announcement of the national lockdown, we have reviewed our Risk Assessment for the school's operation in Term 3 and I write to you to share our position.

The Prime Minister confirmed last night the scientific community's advice that the new variant of Covid-19 is spreading rapidly and that it is between 50 and 70% more transmissible than the previous strand. We were advised that this means that we are all much more likely to catch the virus and to pass it on.

Schools were described as "vectors for transmission", causing the virus to spread between households. As a direct result of this, all mainstream primary and secondary schools, as well as further education colleges were ordered to close effective immediately, with all teaching taking place remotely.

In order to keep the country going, all schools have been asked to make onsite provisions for the key workers' children.

Additionally, a concept of a "vulnerable child" remained high on the governmental agenda and included, amongst other categories, students with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Schools were asked to make onsite provision for those vulnerable children in their settings.

Whilst for mainstream schools, children with EHCPs will be a small minority, for all special schools in the country they amount to the 100% of our school population.

We would love to be able to offer onsite provision to all of our students, but we simply have not got the staffing capacity to do so safely. This is due to many staff being classed as clinically vulnerable and so needing to shield or having children of their own who need to shield, others being unwell with Covid-19 (we wish them all a speedy recovery) and others unwell for other reasons. Our staffing levels are also already affected, and will continue to be affected by the duty to isolate following Track and Trace.

We know that with the previous Covid-19 strand, we often operated at around 50% of staff capacity. Therefore our professional judgement leads us to anticipate that with this new, more transmissible strand and with a greater level of testing and detection, is likely to replicate such low staffing levels or make them even more challenging in the coming Term.

We have every reason to anticipate that the coming weeks will prove extremely turbulent.

Consequently, even though all of our students have EHCPs, Abbot's Lea School simply cannot safely provide for them all on site.

We have had to make a very difficult strategic decision to prioritise who we can help onsite, and who will continue to receive our support remotely at this unprecedented time.

Following yesterday's and today's emergency Leadership Team meetings, and in

communication with the Director of Children's Services at LCC and full support from our Chair of Governors, we have made a decision that we can open our doors over the coming weeks to the following groups of students:

1. Children of essential key workers
2. Children currently on Child Protection Plans (CP, section 47)
3. Children currently classed as Child in Need (CiN, section 17)
4. Children who are Looked After (LAC)
5. Children currently subject to Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT)
6. Children eligible for Free School Meals
7. Students in our Early Years and Key Stage 1
8. Students in our Nurture Provision
9. Students completing internal Supported Internships.

It is important for me to also confirm that, if your child does attend our onsite provision, they are unlikely to be taught consistently by the regular class team, as we may need to make frequent changes to the staff rota to operate safely. This is likely to include internal redeployment of staff as well as use of supply staff. We will do all that we can to make suitable introductions of new staff, where needed.

All other students will need to learn remotely between now and the last day of this term which is Friday 12 February 2021. Remote sessions will be regular, supportive and we will provide ICT equipment to any student who requires it. We will also provide any technical support that families may welcome.

Following numerous queries received this week already, I wish to confirm that, any parent, including parents of student categories listed above, will be fully supported by us as a school, should they wish to exercise their parental decision to keep their child in the safety of their home at this time. Needless to say, I will personally guarantee that, as we are in a national lockdown, I would absolutely not take any action against any family who chooses to do that, and I would stand united with any family challenged in any such matter by their placing Local Authority.

I now need your support in making specific plans for this term.

The survey linked below aims to firstly ascertain whether you wish to keep your child at home and for those who fulfil categories above and wish to send their child in, it aims to identify essential key workers, verify their role and employer and ascertain work pattern.

Please complete the survey linked here as soon as possible, and no later than 2pm today to allow us planning and communication to all families by the end of the day.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BHJ74G/>

Thank you for your patience, your understanding and support.

Yours faithfully



Mrs A Hildrey
Headteacher