



20th March 2020

Dear Parent/ Carer

Re: Arrangements for school opening for critical worker and vulnerable children from Monday onwards

As you know, the Government has announced that schools will close from the end of the day today. The Government wants to limit the spread of coronavirus. It has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open **only for those children who absolutely need to attend**. Whilst the Government believes that schools remain safe places for children, the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

It is important for all parents/carers to understand that **schools are, therefore, 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**. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. The Government expects that every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

The Government has asked parents to 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. *Further information on this can be found below.*
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.
5. Special schools continue to care for children wherever possible.

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, **and you cannot keep your child safe at home** then your children will be prioritised for education provision, alongside other vulnerable children (see further information below).

Will I be counted as a critical worker?

Critical workers include NHS staff, police, farmers and food retail workers, who need to be able to go out to work. In order to continue to offer critical services as part of the country's ongoing response to the virus, children of workers who form a central part of effort - such as NHS workers, police and delivery drivers - will also continue to attend school, college or their childcare provider.

The Government published their definition of critical workers at midnight last night. This is attached at appendix 1

What do you need to do if you think you are a critical worker?

If you have confirmed with your employer that your job is critical to the Covid-19 response and you are not able to safely care for your child at home, then please complete this online form. (<https://forms.gle/S1AciX6ijfYYRtLJ8>). In order for us to plan for Monday 23rd March I would be grateful if you could complete this by 3.30 pm on Friday 20th March. Please note that the Government states –

“If it is possible for children to be at home then they should be.”

Frequently Asked Questions

I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child but I do not want to send my child in to school or childcare, do I have to?

Many parents working in these critical sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be. This is an offer to parents and carers and there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so. For vulnerable children, your child’s social worker will work with you to assess the best option for your child.

If only one parent or carer is a critical worker, can I send my children in to school?

Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the Government can send their children to school if required. However, parents are reminded that if it is possible for their children to be cared for at home, they should make such arrangements. Any arrangements we make will be subject to change, and subject to our levels of staff who are fit for work. **The Spencer Academies Trust has asked us to ensure parents understand we may need to prioritise those families where all parents are critical workers in order to keep essential services supported as best we can. Therefore, accommodating the children of families where only one parent of two is a critical worker may not necessarily be possible.**

We already know some of our parents have critical worker status but we do not know that for all. Therefore, we will be asking parents to provide confirmation that they have critical worker status. We would ask that you bring or send some evidence to school e.g. a copy of your work photo ID, payslip, contract or similar. Ideally we would need receipt of these on Monday 23rd March and no later than Wednesday 25th March, to ensure continuity of care.

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, ‘looked after’ children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. We will contact parents individually whose children we believe belong within these categories.

When will school be open to the critical worker children?

School will be open from **8:30 am to 3:00pm** initially but may be subject to change according to staff levels and numbers of pupils

Breakfast will be available in Breakfast club and the children will need to **bring their equipment for school work and suitable footwear and clothing for PE from home** so they can complete the work set like the rest of the children as well as have additional challenges and tasks being set in school. A snack at breaktime and food at Lunch will also be available from the school canteen. Social distancing guidance and recommended handwashing routines will continue.

Registration will be via in B Block Hall at 8:30 a.m. and children need to leave or be collected from the main entrance on Gedling Road at 3:00 pm.

What will happen with free school meals?

We know that free school meals are important for many of our families.

To make sure eligible children can continue to be supported, the Government will give schools the flexibility to provide meals or vouchers to children eligible for free school meals. We are waiting more guidance on this but in the meantime, the Trust are providing Tesco food vouchers **for families whose children are not attending school**. Children eligible for free school meals who are attending school will continue to receive a meal – this may be a hot or cold meal depending on what staffing/pupil levels we have – and therefore will not require food vouchers.

If your child or children are eligible for free school meals but will not be attending schools from Monday, please call in to school to collect your vouchers from Tuesday 24th March onwards between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. – the initial allocation will be Tesco vouchers for 2 weeks up to Easter to the value of £25. Further information will be sent out about how we will provide support for families going forward after Friday 3rd April, as the Government has indicated it intends to make arrangements for this.

If you or your child are unable to collect these yourself, please let us know who will collect on your behalf. This named person must provide the full name, date of birth, class or form teacher for the pupil and some photo identity for themselves.

What will happen to exams and tests?

Primary assessments, including SATs, and exams including GCSEs, AS levels and A levels will not go ahead this summer. The Government are working with the sector and Ofqual to ensure young people get the qualifications they need. Further details are expected from the Government shortly.

Please note that all of these arrangements remain subject to change due to staffing, health and safety reasons, together with changing national guidance. Arrangements may need to change if resources are limited – this may include us needing to reduce take up. It may also be necessary for children to attend other Spencer School sites should guidance or staffing dictate.

Further information can be found at

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

Please bear with us if it seems that we are continually updating communication and asking for further information. It is a changing national picture to which we are having to respond.

Thank you so much to the many of you who have shared messages of thanks and support with our staff and thank you for your understanding. We are all working hard to do our very best for our young people.

Kind regards,

Matt Robertson
Principal

Appendix 1 – List of Critical workers

1. Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to

- doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics,
- social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers;
- the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector;
- those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

2. Education and childcare

This includes

- nursery and teaching staff,
- social workers and
- those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

3. Key public services

This includes

- those essential to the running of the justice system,
- religious staff,
- charities and workers delivering key frontline services,
- those responsible for the management of the deceased,
- journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

4. Local and national Government

This only includes

- those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or
- delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in Government agencies and arms length bodies.

5. Food and other necessary goods

This includes

- those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery
- those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

6. Public safety and national security

This includes

- police and support staff,
- Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic),
- fire and rescue service employees (including support staff),
- National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security,
- prison and probation staff and
- other national security roles, including those overseas.

7. Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass

8. Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes

- staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure),
- the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage),
- information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services),
- postal services and delivery,
- payments providers
- waste disposal sectors.