

# FARINGDON INFANT SCHOOL

Faringdon Learning Trust

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*Our Vision for FIS –*

*Future of Faringdon; Including all; Supporting everyone to grow*

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

## Key Worker Places in School

I hope that you are all having a restful weekend with your families.

I am writing to update you on the position in school and to ask for your help. Since Monday evening, we have had a huge number of requests for school places for children of key workers. Thank you very much to those who have been kind enough to share a letter from your employer stating that your role falls into this category and, in particular, to those whose employers who have been willing to do this on a case-by-case basis and not as a generic letter.

As we have watched the number of children in our school, and locally, grow by the day and continued to hear the dreadful news of higher than ever coronavirus case numbers, hospitalisations and death rates, I feel I must write to you to warn that we are seriously worried about the numbers of children in school. We are nearing capacity in some year groups (especially on some days). We have also had children tell staff that one or both parents are at home this week, or on some days. This is of concern given that, if you are at home, then you should please do everything you can to keep your child at home with you. Some of you, we know, are doing exactly this. Last week, local schools, including ours, sought advice from local government on how to manage our numbers and were clearly told that

*Schools should ask parents/carers to provide individual evidence of their critical worker status using the published guidance. (We have asked local employers not to issue a blanket organisational letter)*

*Schools should engage parents/carers in exploring if the place is necessary in line with the guidance which was updated on 7<sup>th</sup> January.*

[Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544242/restricting-attendance-during-the-national-lockdown-schools.pdf)

**Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.**

Some of the outcomes of having such large numbers in school are as follows

- **The numbers of children in classrooms and coming and going from school creates an inevitable increase in risk for your child, the other children in their bubble, our staff and the families of all of those people.** The Government have been clear now that schools are a 'vector for transmission' and that these higher numbers are not what was envisaged.
- **The number of children attending school is creating a greater risk that the lockdown and school 'closure' will not actually be able to take its desired effect** and that we will be in no safer a position after February Half Term. This means we could all be facing a much longer lockdown and school closure. None of us want to be in this position for longer than is necessary and no one want to continue to be isolated from family and friends for even longer. This is dependent on all of us doing everything we can possibly do to improve the situation.

- We may find ourselves having to refuse school places and these should rightly be available and protected for critical and essential roles such as our NHS staff, military personnel.
- Almost every single member of staff is now required for classroom teaching the vast majority of the time. This is a significant problem if we are struck by staff sickness. It also means that remote learning live lessons on Teams will, almost exclusively, have to be delivered from a classroom, with the bubble group who are in school being taught simultaneously. This does compromise the teacher's ability to see and interact with the remote learners.
- Things do not always seem 'fair' for some of you. We all understand that it is very hard to support younger children with home learning, not least if you are working from home at the same time or have children of different ages accessing different lessons and learning. The majority of my staff team are in the exact same position but are still only accessing school places when absolutely unavoidable. My own three children are not attending school despite me being in work for long hours daily. If there is a partner working from home or the possibility of a childcare support bubble, this should be being used. It causes understandable frustration and upset for those who are doing this in order to protect us all, when they become aware that others are not doing the same.

I must urge you to think carefully about your school place if your child is now attending key worker provision or if you are thinking of requesting a place. If you have another option at any time during the week, please use this. Thank you to those who are doing so. **The safest place for your child right now is at home.** As has been the case throughout the pandemic, the success of reducing rates of transmission and keeping our more vulnerable members of society safe from this dreadful virus, depend upon all of us.

**Please let us know by email or phone call to the school office, if you can make changes to your request for a school places to reduce the strain and risk we currently find ourselves facing.**

Please be aware that, if you have not already done this, we may ask for evidence of key worker status and working patterns in order to ensure that we do not have to turn away children whose parents are needed for essential services such as the NHS. We are no more comfortable with this than you will be, but it is now what is recommended of us in order to minimise the risks from this virus.

Finally, please understand that we are in a very difficult situation. Those of you who are frustrated that you believe children are attending school when they have parents at home, we ask you to understand that we are trying to work with the information we have and not to compromise essential services. Those of you who would like your children in school full time but do not have a place, we ask you to understand that we need to try to keep school safe and not undermine the purpose of the lockdown by accepting any child for whom we receive a request.

We have absolute empathy for how difficult this situation is for everyone involved, and much harder as a result of short notice, leaving us all no time to plan or prepare. We absolutely want to support every member of our school community in the best way, and ask that you support us in return.

**The safest place for everyone at the moment is at home.**

Take care and stay safe,

*Mrs Sally Robins and the team 😊*