



St Patrick's RC Primary School, Dipton

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Headteacher: Mrs J Burgess
We follow in Christ's footsteps

3rd January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Happy New Year! I hope you managed to have an enjoyable, if very different, Christmas break and that your loved ones remain well.

The disruption, uncertainty and new ways of living and working we have become accustomed to in 2020, sadly look set to continue as we move into 2021. I am sure you have all been following the press coverage, over the last few weeks, and you will therefore be aware of the additional concerns raised regarding a safe return to work for pupils and staff. Most of the country is in a Tier 4 category which means severe restrictions are in place affecting our movements. Coupled with a new (even more) contagious strain of the virus now evident, we find ourselves in a precarious position.

In view of these changing conditions, organisations representing school staff have called for a national response and deemed an immediate return to work for its members unsafe. These members of staff have worked tirelessly with a huge level of commitment throughout the pandemic, but it is now viewed that a consistent approach, across tiers and regions, is needed for the safety of all – pupils, staff and the wider community. This has been recognised by Durham Local Authority.

As a result of developments over the Christmas break, school will not be able to reopen fully on January 5th. Attendance will be limited to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers only (should families wish to take up a place). Numbers of pupils able to attend will be radically reduced and we ask that you only request a place if absolutely necessary. School will apply the following criteria in this order:

- Vulnerable pupils e.g. pupils with additional needs (should families wish to take up a place);
- Pupils with both parents/carers who are key workers and there is no other available childcare.

Parents of vulnerable children, or children with additional needs, will be contacted directly by a member of staff tomorrow. If you are not contacted by Monday pm, and you feel your child is in this category, please ring the school office. Parents who wish to apply for key worker status will need to complete the form which will follow in a further email and return to diptonstpatricks@durhamlearning.net by 1.30pm tomorrow so we can plan accordingly.

If you are allocated a place for your child (confirmed by a member of staff), the expectation is full day attendance, adhering to the staggered times which operated in the autumn term. Please do not send your child to school without confirmation that a place has been allocated. Breakfast club will still operate and strict social distancing will remain in place.

Remote learning will begin for all those pupils remaining at home on Tuesday 5th September via our Purple Mash portal. An updated information sheet will be shared tomorrow so you are aware of how this will operate. If any families have difficulties accessing the technology needed, please contact us. We will also be in touch with families of those pupils in receipt of free school meals who will not be attending school.

Please be assured this is not the way we intended to start out new school year and I fully understand the additional challenges this will bring to some families. The situation will be reviewed after 2 weeks when I hope we are able to resume school attendance for all our pupils on January 18th. I will, of course, keep you updated.

Thank you, for your support. It is, as always, much appreciated.

Kindest regards

Mrs J Burgess
Headteacher

Mrs K Plunkett
Chair of Governors

Mrs P Dooley
Vice Chair of Governors

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY IN READING OR INTERPRETING THIS DOCUMENT PLEASE CALL 01207 570316

