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Information for parents who are critical workers

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am sure lots of you would have seen in the press over the weekend that the guidance to schools has changed re critical workers. We wanted to update you on the current Federation position on critical workers. Currently we have given places to nearly every parent that has requested but we have a waiting list of 6 children at Southcote. All of these children are in either Reception or Year 3.

What has become clear over the past week however is that the number of pupils eligible to attend school under the critical worker provision is much higher than in the first lockdown as more families fall into the various categories. I would like to thank you for all you are doing to support the COVID effort at this time. During the first lockdown at Southcote we had 23 children from critical workers, this time we have 140. At Katesgrove we had 20 children in the first lockdown and have 64 currently.

As a school we received further guidance from the DFE on Friday evening (6pm). This update has reiterated that whilst children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required, parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if at all possible.

This information can be found in the DFE document: Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools Guidance for all schools in England. It states:

*'Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school if required. This includes parents who may be working from home. Schools should speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to go to school. If it proves necessary, schools can ask for simple evidence that the parent in question is a critical worker, such as their work ID badge or pay slip. **Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.**'*

This has been taken from page 25/61 and from page 5 of the Education and Childcare settings: national lockdown guidance.

We know that several local schools have withdrawn places from parents who are working from home. **Currently** we are not proposing to do this. However if guidance changes we may need to. What we are

doing is asking all parents with critical worker spaces to review if they need the provision full time. For example if you or any adult in the household only works part time please only send your child to school

for the hours they work. We know several parents are currently doing this and thank you for this.

Please only send your child to school if absolutely necessary. It continues to be our desire to accommodate parents needs as far as possible whilst also continuing to balance the need to keep everyone else in school safe. Please therefore, can I ask you to take some time to review your own situation and consider whether you can reduce your need so we can begin to plan for the weeks ahead.

Current figures taken from www.schoolcovidmap.org.uk (last updated 12th January) indicate the following rates:

- Southcote and surrounding local areas – 927 per 100,000 (an increase of 288 from 639 last week)
- Katesgrove: Southampton St, Redlands Rd and surrounding local areas – 712 per 100,000 (an increase of 172 from 540 last week)
- Reading – 754 per 100,000 (an increase of 198 from 556 last week)

For the first time Reading also recorded more than 1000 cases in a week between 27th December and 2nd January as reported in The Reading Chronicle.

The Federation in the last week has had four positive adults and we have already had to close a bubble at Katesgrove.

If you feel that you are now able to change your initial request, please send updates to the school office as soon as possible.

I apologise that we may appear to be changing our minds from our initial response to parents last week but we have had to respond to the updates and changes made over the weekend and wanted to inform parents as soon as we were able.

Hopefully after this we will be able to settle into consistent patterns and further guidance will arrive in a more timely manner.

Can I once again thank all our wonderful critical workers for all they do, we are so proud to support you. Please do not feel in any way that we are trying to pressure you to remove your place. The Federation staff all want to support you and are proud to come in every day and work with your children.

Another thank you to all parents that are supporting their children with Remote Learning. We know it isn't easy to do this at the same time as working from home yourself but we appreciate your efforts and will continue to review our offer to make further improvements.

Yours sincerely



Executive Headteacher
The Kennet Federation