

20th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re - Covid 19 – Special School arrangements from 23rd March 2020

In Trafford we recognise that the impact of the advice around keeping safe and self-isolation has led to the temporary closure a number of special schools. Following the general government announcement on 18th March about school closures, we have all been issued with further guidance today which is based on the most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19.

‘If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But 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.

That is why the government 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.’

We understand that it is important to provide access to school for specific groups of children and young people. We are being asked to stay open for children and young people who have a parent who is a key worker, those who are vulnerable and have support from social care and those with an Education Health and Care plan.

The full guidance document including the key worker list can be found using this link;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

We recognise that this includes all children and young people in special schools and so this will be exceptionally difficult given that many staff are absent due to self- isolation measures.

So that we are able to provide this level of support, Special School head teachers met with Local Authority officers from Education and Social Care to consider how this will work in practice.

It was agreed that each school will have to prioritise the offer available to their community based on the staffing levels they have available and the following considerations;

Children and young people

- whose parent(s) are considered ‘Key workers’
- who are subject to a Child Protection Plan
- whose family require significant support from social care (Children in Need)

It is important for us to recognise that each school’s situation will be slightly different. Decisions will be made on the basis of providing a safe environment for children and staff given the Public Health England guidelines we are all following.

Schools are 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. Therefore the focus in school will be on providing care rather than delivering the full curriculum.

All schools will take measures to support families who they know are in need; food parcels maybe been distributed and supermarket vouchers given to those on free school meals. We are awaiting further guidance from the government as to how we will be able to continue to provide this support.

Each school will be asking all parents and carers about their profession. Clearly providing care for NHS frontline staff is the priority, followed by other key workers. We understand that many of you struggle to care for your son/daughter, but we are asking that if, under these unprecedented circumstances you could bear in mind that we need to ensure we work together to enable these people to get to work. We aim to keep numbers of people on site at a level that does not increase the risk of infection and still provide safe ratios of care. If you do not work in a key profession and you can manage to support your son/daughter at home, please contact school to let them know.

We may have to offer some placements on a part time basis. Once arrangements are in place, parents and carers will be notified individually. Please be mindful that circumstances are likely to change, and we will be risk assessing staffing levels and rates of infection whilst considering government guidelines on a daily basis.

Each school will provide information and resources for children and young people who are not on site at this time. These will be tailored to your child's needs and will be provided directly by your child's school. Please do not feel under pressure to deliver a full time table of learning activities.

Further advice, guidance and information to support you at this time can be found on Trafford's Local Offer page;

<https://www.trafforddirectory.co.uk/kb5/trafford/fsd/advice.page?id=6TzAFXlfQtI>

During these unprecedented times we are committed to working together across Education, Health and Social Care services and we truly appreciate your support. This letter has been shared with and approved by Ms Justine Bailey on behalf of Trafford Parent Carer Forum.

Signed:

Trafford Special School Head Teachers and Local Authority Officers

Ms Jude Lomas (Brentwood School and College)

Ms Sally Burston (Delamere School)

Mr Paul Madden (Egerton High School)

Mr Paul Eckley (Manor Academy – Sovereign Trust)

Mr Simon Beswick and Ms Helen O'Brien (Orchards School – Dunham Trust)

Mr Andrew Taylor (Pictor Academy and Longford Park School– Sovereign Trust)

Ms Lynda Thompson (Trafford High and the Medical Education Service)

Dr Karen Harris (Head of Service for Inclusion and Principal Educational Psychologist)

Mrs Sally Smith (Inclusion Advisor and SEN Advisory Service manager)

Ms Theresa Dearn (Team Leader Social Care – Complex Needs)

Mrs Justine Bailey (Directors of Trafford Parents Forum)