

7 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Arrangements for the new national lockdown

Following the Prime Minister's announcement, we are writing to confirm what the arrangements will be for continuing education at Sir Bernard Lovell Academy. At present we are anticipating that these arrangements will be in place until the start of Term 2 on Monday 22nd February 2021.

During this period of new national lockdown our school will only be open for pupils who are deemed to be vulnerable or who have a parent/carer who is a critical worker. All other pupils must remain at home and will receive their lessons remotely. Further guidance for schools from the Department for Education is expected shortly but we would like to share with you what we have been told, and put in place, thus far.

Why schools have been closed

This decision does not suggest that schools and colleges are no longer safe places for children and young people. Instead, limiting attendance is about reducing the number of contacts that all of us have with people in other households.

The government has resisted closing schools until now, but in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, they now need to use every lever at their disposal to reduce all contacts outside households wherever possible. The government is responding to the intense pressure on the NHS, but that pressure is not driven by children. The UK is not seeing significant pressure from coronavirus (COVID-19) in paediatrics across the country. The new variant appears to affect all ages but there have not been any changes in the severity among any age groups, including children and young people. It still remains the case that the overwhelming majority of children and young people have no symptoms or very mild illness only. As cases in the community rise there will be a small increase in the number of children with coronavirus (COVID-19) who only rarely require admission to hospital.

Vulnerable children and children of critical workers who can attend school

During the period of national lockdown, schools and colleges should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend. Children with at least one parent or carer who is [listed as a critical worker](#) are eligible for a school place. It is not necessary for both parents to be critical workers. The critical worker list has been updated to include new workforces whose work is critical following the end of the EU transition period.

In our school, the provision for critical workers' children will operate as follows:

- Provision will be from 8.45am – 3.05pm.
- Students will be 'bubbled' similar to Year Group bubbles.
- Parents/Carers **must** book places for their children to attend via the form on the Academy website. Places must be booked in advance and by Wednesday of the week before at the latest.
- Students should attend in full uniform with an appropriate winter coat.
- Students will be issued with a laptop to work socially distanced at their own desk to complete the Remote Learning as per previous communications.

If your child is deemed to be vulnerable, you will be contacted individually to discuss their educational provision and it is our sincere hope that they will come into school. We know that across the country vulnerable children lost more ground than other children during the first national lockdown and we want to avoid this happening for our children if at all possible.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

A COVID-19 testing programme will be rolled out in secondary schools to enable weekly testing for staff and daily close testing of staff and pupils, over a period of seven days, if they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive. The aim of this programme is to reduce transmission and reduce the numbers of pupils and staff having to self-isolate. We will be writing to parents/carers with a secondary aged son/daughter to explain how this will work in their school and how we will go about gaining consent. This will initially only be in place for those pupils attending school but the intention is to include all pupils once schools return to normal at the end of February, providing consent has been given of course.

Free school meal provision

During the period of national lockdown, schools will continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school. Meals will be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals who are in school. In our Trust we will provide vouchers for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals whilst learning from home, through the Sodexo voucher scheme as before. We expect to be able to issue these by the end of the week and the scheme will be administered by each school.

Remote education

All pupils who remain at home will be taught remotely. As a guide, primary pupils will be expected to do 3 hours a day, on average across the school cohort. Secondary pupils will be expected to do at least 4 hours a day with more for pupils working towards formal qualifications this year. Students can access their online learning via this link: <https://students.sbllearning.org.uk/>

National examinations

The Department for Education has said that, in these circumstances, it does not think it is possible for exams such as GCSE and A Level to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking the exam regulator, Ofqual, to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly. Whilst we do not know the detail, we assume that this will include a large element of school-based assessment so we urge students in Years 11 and 13 to continue to work hard to ensure they get the qualifications they deserve.

Risk Assessment

As is now standard practice, all our provision will have been through a rigorous risk assessment process. Our risk assessment is regularly reviewed and agreed by our Trust Board and is available to view on the Trust website at www.wellswaymat.com. Our over-riding concern is always the health and safety of our pupils, staff and families and we aim to mitigate risks through having rigorous control measures in place, such as mask wearing, maintaining social distance, ventilation and hand/respiratory hygiene measures. We also will continue to exercise our duty to safeguard children regardless of whether they are in school or learning from home.

We hope you will find this information useful and we will continue to update you regularly as new information emerges. We will also be sending you a regular Trust bulletin to give you an insight into what is happening across our family of schools. Please do let us know if you have anything that you would like to share in the bulletin by emailing enquiries@wellswaymat.com.

We look forward to welcoming eligible children into school and hope that as many as possible will attend. For those children learning from home our message is simply “work hard, try your best and ask your teachers for help when you need it”. We wish all our pupils, and their families, all the very best for the next seven weeks. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours faithfully,



Mr D Anderson
Principal



Andrea Arlidge
Chief Executive