

Sunday, 3 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

We hope that you have had a restful break with your families, despite the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. On Wednesday 30th December 2020, the government announced a delay to the reopening of primary schools 'in areas with exceptional rates of incidence or transmission of the virus'. Watford has been identified as one of these areas, which means that our schools will now not open as planned on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

All primary schools in Watford **will only open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children**, including those with an EHCP. This is currently the guidance until Monday January 18th 2021 when the Government will review the situation.

Whilst this is extremely challenging for all, we hope you will be reassured that the schools will continue to provide remote and online learning. Our children in Years 1-6 will access learning through Google classroom and Reception and Nursery aged children will have work uploaded via Tapestry. We know from the previous lockdown that workload was tricky for some parents, staff will be on hand to support you with this. Further general guidance will be posted on the school websites from Monday.

Staff will contact you on Monday via phone to see how you are and discuss arrangements for the next two weeks. These calls will come from withheld numbers so please do answer when you receive the call.

### **Critical workers and vulnerable families**

**Please remember that government guidance under such circumstances is that the safest place for your child is at home.** Our schools will continue to remain open to support and provide onsite education for the children of our critical worker parents and our most vulnerable families. **The government has asked you as parents to keep your children at home wherever possible and asked us as schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.** The fewer children making the journey to school, the lower the risk that the virus can spread. Please can we urge you consider extremely carefully whether you absolutely have to send your child to school. If you are working from home, please keep your child safe at home with you and support the efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. By doing this, we hope that our numbers will be kept to a minimum to ensure the protection and safety of all our children and staff.

Please note, to reduce risk in school, we request that **both** parents are classified as critical workers, or one parent in a single parent household.

The school will contact families that are vulnerable to identify and plan with them if they need in school provision for their child/ren.

Please click [here](#) to access the latest most up to date list of roles that qualify as critical workers. If you qualify and you have no alternative childcare, please fill in the form [here](#) **Please complete by 9:45am on Monday 4th January.**

### **Opening arrangements for children attending school**

- Children will be kept with their year group and not mixed - assuming staffing allows this
- The school day will run between **8:45 and 3:15**. Breakfast club and after school club will sadly **not** run
- Children are expected to wear school uniform to school as usual
- Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan who are supported by a 1-1 Teaching Assistant will have their usual adult where possible, but this may change depending on the circumstances of this adult
- Children will be provided with a hot meal at school or they can bring in a packed lunch.

### **Communicating with families**

Communication with families is challenging at this time and we urge you to check your emails regularly and read all text communications from the school. This is our main way of getting information to you whilst we are missing face to

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face contact, so it is very important that you continue to check. The school website, class twitter feeds and the fortnightly newsletters are also excellent ways to stay in touch with things at the school.

### Technology & Resources at Home

We know from our experience of lockdown and remote learning that some families do not have the necessary technology at home for their child/ren to access online learning. We do have some devices at school that we can lend to families. School will be open on Monday for parents & carers to collect devices – you will have to sign a waiver upon collection. In addition, if you need resources such as books, pencils, pens and other stationery we can offer this to families

### Free School Meals

We are in the process of communicating with our catering company on how we are going to provide food for all children. This information will be provided to parents/carers by Monday 4th January 2021.

### Change of financial circumstance

- If your circumstances have changed over the last few months, your child may now be eligible for free school meals. Please consider if you are receiving any of the following:
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit), with an annual income below £16,190
  - Pension Guarantee Credit
  - Employment and Support Allowance, income related
  - Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999
  - Working Tax Credit run-on, paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
  - Universal Credit, with a household income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
- Please register at [Hertfordshire Free School Meals](#). If you need support, please email the school and they will advise you what to do next.

### Reminders of Reporting Covid-19

It is essential that you inform us about any positive Covid cases or even Covid symptoms of anyone in your household. From Monday 4th January, please report any COVID absence or positive tests directly to your child's school.

If anyone in your household develops any of the following three symptoms, your whole household must isolate and you need to arrange testing immediately.

- **a high temperature** – this means you or your child feels hot to touch on their chest or back (you do not need to measure their temperature, but if your child's temperature is over 38 degrees, this qualifies as a high temperature in addition to the feeling hot to touch on their chest or back)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you or your child usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you or your child cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If someone in your household tests positive - all members of your household and anyone the positive case has had close contact with must isolate for 10 days from last contact- this may include your support / childcare bubble.

### Tier 4 restrictions & guidelines

Please ensure you have read and follow all advice and restrictions of Tier 4 so that we can keep our community safe, which can be found in full at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-4-stay-at-home>

We are sure you will appreciate that this is a huge logistical challenge. Once further information is received over the coming days, it will be communicated to you as quickly as possible. Please do not be alarmed by the contents of this letter, we are working in very challenging times but our paramount concern is the safety and wellbeing of the staff, children and parents in our community.

James Roach – CEO, Inclusive Multi Academy Trust  
Gillian Jackson – Headteacher, Beechfield School  
Cheska Tyler – Headteacher, Cherry Tree School  
Sebastian Gray – Headteacher, Laurance Haines School