



# Le Cateau

## Community Primary School

11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### **RE: URGENT UPDATE ON CRITICAL WORKER STATUS**

Dear Parents / Carers,

With the first week of National Lockdown complete, we are glad to have been able to settle relatively smoothly into a new routine, offering face-to-face in-school provision for our vulnerable children and those from our critical worker families whilst providing online remote learning to all our pupils at home. We have been able to reach this point thanks to the tireless efforts of staff in preparing and improving our systems whilst adapting to ever-changing circumstances. With these measures in place until at least the February half term, I am pleased that we have got the elements up and running and that engagement is very good.

What is clear from last week, however, is that the number of pupils eligible to attend school under the critical worker provision is significantly higher than during the first lockdown. In comparison, at the start of the first lockdown, we had on average 25 children accessing the site where as today, we have 108 pupils on site. Given the direct messages around reducing contacts, this is **a major concern** therefore we need to ensure that we can accommodate those most in need whilst recognising that we must continue to **do everything that we can to keep staff and pupils as safe as possible in school** in light of recent Coronavirus developments.

As I am sure you will understand, running a dual system of educating and supervising children in school whilst providing remote learning to those children at home places an additional logistical staffing burden on the school as teachers are deployed to online teaching whilst staff are still required in the classrooms for those being educated in school. The extremely rapid rate of transmission of the virus at the moment means that we must do everything we can to protect our school community: pupils, parents and staff alike.

The **guidance from the Department for Education** has been updated in the last 48 hours reiterating that whilst children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can attend face-to-face provision in school if required, **parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they possibly can.** The simple message is - **if you are not in work then your child should be at home with you!**

The schools across the Garrison have been working closely with the Garrison Commander and the relevant MOD departments. There is a clear directive being sent requesting they flexibly juggle the demands of home schooling and work. The Garrison Commander has also asked Units and the attached elements of the MOD (Aramark etc) not to issue a blanket organisational letter. Instead, they must be an individual letter stating why the named person is critical at this moment in time. Without this information, we will not be allocating a place for critical workers.

For our part, we must stress that places in school for critical worker children are finite and we ask that **you only take up a place if absolutely necessary.** As a community we must ensure that there is space for our healthcare workers' children, those MOD personnel undertaking Covid related deployments and other vital roles that are actively helping to fight the pandemic. Many of our critical workers, particularly hospital and frontline medical staff,

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will be working additional hours and covering multiple shifts and we want to ensure that we prioritise those with the most urgent need.

Accordingly, **we are now asking you to review your needs and consider only sending your child to school if it is absolutely necessary** in order to carry out your critical worker role. We appreciate that a number of you have shared your personal information regarding critical worker status however, we may need to ask parents/carers to provide individual evidence of their critical worker status using the published guidance if we become overwhelmed by requests. Given the national severity of Covid-19 and the messages that further restrictions are highly likely, parents should discuss any continuing difficulties with their own employer's HR department and further investigate reasonable adjustments to working patterns in order to support. Yes, we are aware that a number of your roles are key and will not be able to change, however, we know that some demands placed on people by their work settings are really not helpful and that the roles carried out are not **'critical roles in relation to combating Covid-19'**!

It is our desire is to accommodate parents' needs as far as possible whilst keeping children and staff in school safe but, just like other schools, we are balancing very difficult priorities. While we have carried out all the required risk assessments and put the relevant procedures in place to keep school safe, we recognise that younger children in particular find it very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain social distancing. For this reason, if we can find ways to reduce the number of children in school on any day, especially in the younger groups, this would reduce even further the risk of spreading infection.

As we start this new week, please take some time to review your own situation and consider where you can reduce your need and exposure. Many of you have already been in contact informing us that your employers have supported the demands placed on families by reducing working patterns, placing people on furlough or by allowing people to work from home. We have carried out the same review in school to ensure staff are safe. If you do have an update and working patterns change, please send any updates to us as soon as possible via [covid@le-cateau.n-yorks.sch.uk](mailto:covid@le-cateau.n-yorks.sch.uk) to enable us to plan for the weeks ahead.

Thank you in advance for your help and support in this matter. It is extremely challenging for everyone involved but we must work together to overcome the challenges caused by this virus.

Please stay safe!



Mr Ian Mottram  
Headteacher