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A Specialist College for
Communication and Interaction

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20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have now received guidance (see italic text below) about which children can still access childcare whilst schools are officially closed, in order to ensure that other members of our society can continue to work and provide the essential services that will enable us to recover as quickly as possible from this current crisis. **The roles of our staff team will have to be different over the next few weeks and months, since schools need to focus on providing safety and child care for the identified children, rather than focusing on educational provision.**

Where this will take place and what it will look like will be finalised by the Local Authority and Special School Headteachers as soon as possible.

Advice from the Government – 19th March 2020

The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

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**.

Schools are, therefore, 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.

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health care plans (EHCPs).

We know that schools will also want to support other children facing social difficulties and we will support head teachers to do so.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- 1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.***
- 2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.***
- 3. Parents should not rely on childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.***

4. *Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.*
5. *Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.*

Vulnerable children

Children deemed as vulnerable include:

1. Children who are supported by social care
2. Children those with safeguarding and welfare needs – including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children
3. Children who are young carers
4. Disabled children and those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

We are fully aware that all of our children and young people fall under the category 4 within the list above. We have formed a plan as to how best to support our families whilst ensuring that all of our students as well as our staff remain as safe as possible due to the increasing spread of COVID-19.

Please let us know if you think your child may fall into the keyworker status and you will be unable to make an arrangement to keep them at home.

Please email the attached form (**Request for Key Worker Status Support**) to office@corbetstey.havering.sch.uk as soon as possible. We will be in touch again as soon as we can to share details about the arrangements that will be in place.

All other children and young people will need to stay at home whilst we ascertain how many key worker children/young people we need to make safe and suitable arrangements for.

We are also in discussions with social care regarding the families who have most critical need for respite in these challenging circumstances. We have committed to work in partnership with the CAD team to safeguard our children identified as most at risk during this time. The focus is on safety and child care rather than education.

We have made arrangements to deliver Free School Meal (FSM) to eligible students and their siblings from Monday.

We have created links between Class teachers and Parents/Carers to provide educational stimulation and regular communication.

We have decreasing staff numbers now that those with their own underlying health conditions are socially distancing. We also have a rising number of staff who are self-isolating after contact with confirmed or suspected cases and want to make sure our service is sensible and sustainable.

We know this is a confusing and worrying time and thank you for your continued support during this difficult time. Please be assured that our **only** aim is to keep our children and families' safe and well during this period.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Allen
Headteacher



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