

22nd March 2020



Dear Parents / Carers,

Ref: Supporting Children of Key Workers

Firstly I want to apologise to you all for not being able to send you out information relating to this before now . For the past few days advice , directives and issues pertaining to how we in schools are to manage our provision has been changing so fast , I could not be accurate in what I could tell you. Schools have issued advice / information on Friday night which is now out of date! So the information I am giving you today is accurate FOR NOW. Things could change at any time. Please , Please , Please continue to check the app , your emails or the website on a regular basis for the latest advice.

SCHOOL WILL NOT BE OPEN FOR KEY WORKER PUPILS UNTIL WEDNESDAY.

Tomorrow and Tuesday will be required to meet with staff , set up an agreed staff rota, do a detailed Risk Assessment , Prepare the school for receiving pupils , get resources ready , consulting with Board of Governors for approval of actions.

As Principal I am acutely aware of the current crisis everyone is facing and will endeavour to do all in my power to help ensure the health and safety of the pupils and staff in our settings and wider communities. I am pastorally keen to support the Minister's request re the availability of childcare facilities for key workers in this crisis. However, this has been initiated with such haste, that we must consider carefully the potential implications of such an extensive list and ensure that appropriate steps are put in place to manage this request effectively.

It is worth bearing in mind that we have been instructed to close to minimise the risk of infection transfer at a time of national and global crisis. It is essential, therefore, that we are still able to comply with this ultimate reason for closure. Consequently, we will only be able to offer places for childcare based on capacity. To inform that decision, we need to be able to manage who can access the care, otherwise the original reason for closure of our schools and nurseries becomes meaningless. In practice, this **means we are not able to safely provide the offer of childcare from Monday morning**, but may need a few days to organise the provision, and ensure sufficient staffing and safeguarding measures. We may also need to consider offering places to a smaller group, where the need is most urgent.

Once key information has been gathered and decisions made, only families with an offer of a place should attend, and they should only do so when directed to by us. It could potentially be impossible to accept the number of families who may apply for such provision, given the extensive nature of the Minister's key worker list.

To support us and help us inevitably to support those most in need and yet still safeguard appropriately, we request that, if you require this provision, you contact the Principal with the information required in the form below. Before doing so, please consider the current guidance. Please be aware, guidance may alter later today if we receive more specific updates from the Education Minister

Please do not assume that we will be open as this will be dependent on availability of staff and provision being put in place by the Department of Education to ensure PHA regulations are met in the current crisis.

Before contacting us, **please pay particular attention to the following points.** We will not be able to operate a 'normal' school day. **There will be no teaching.** We are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time.

Points to consider

A list of key workers, issued by the Department of Education is listed overleaf. Only children with at least **1 parent** working as a key worker and both parents **out at work at the same time** should consider requesting care. In single parent families, the individual parent **MUST** be a key worker. The statement by the First Minister regarding ONE KEY WORKER in a family is guidance and NOT statutory. The TWO KEY WORKERS directive may be applied dependent on numbers. It is NOT compulsory for key worker children to attend. This is an EMERGENCY child care facility.

If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child. For example, with other family members, friends etc. Please only use our care as a last resort. **This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a confined space in line with recent social distancing guidance.**

Children attending will be required to wear their uniform. They should not bring bags or books as this creates potential for cross contamination. Please be advised that we will be performing **childcare duties**, NOT teaching, as pupils of all ages will be in together and not just teachers will be supervising. **DO NOT SEND IN HOME LEARNING PACKS ISSUED LAST WEEK** . Teachers must also be available to prepare online/remote learning. Also, there will not necessarily be First Aid available in school depending on the staff who are present.

Social distancing will mean children will have to be kept 2m apart at desks in the hall thus limiting the number of children we can accommodate and dependent on the staff available. Please note that staff will have to be 2m from every child in order to keep themselves and their families safe from infection. This will be incredible difficult and potentially stressful in this situation.

THE SAFEST PLACE FOR YOUR CHILD RIGHT NOW IS AT HOME. As the law states , children of age 14 and older are legally allowed to babysit younger siblings, if this applies to you please avail of this option.

Please send a healthy snack for break-time and a packed lunch. Staff will not be able to help children to open lunch items so keep this in mind.

Please note staff are being asked to come into school without adequate protective gear and therefore left exposed. In addition , our cleaning staff is unavailable due to the 12 week isolation rule for high risk people. This has a massive impact on school operations. We have had no advice by the authorities on this issue as yet. It is a huge concern which I am trying to resolve. Therefore , if you are not a blue light or hospital worker I would implore you , in the interests of the whole school community and beyond , to enquire about working from home , swapping shifts with colleagues who do not have child care issues etc..

In addition, If the ratio of staff to pupils decreases, a call will be made to close the school and parents will be informed immediately. Please note , I will not be in school as I am now in isolation due to the high risk stipulations. I will therefore be managing the school remotely.

I would ask that you pay attention to the points outlined above before requesting childcare. **To minimize the spread of the virus, it is essential that we keep the number of children and staff in our setting as low as possible. Therefore, please do not make this request unless it is a last resort.**

Obviously, it goes without saying, if your **only** option is to request our care, we will look after them in order to support you in your important role. However, please note that this service is for our children only and the normal school hours will apply to your child.

If you want to request a place , please email the application form below to me at smcmullan745@c2kni.net by 9am Monday 23rd March. This will give us time to adequately prepare for opening on Wednesday 25th March.

These are challenging times and I want to emphasise how much we greatly value the work that frontline services are doing to save lives and limit the long term impact of this devastating virus. We are all so grateful for the selfless sacrifice so many are making on our behalf. We applaud you.

For now I must reiterate that this situation is continually developing and I will endeavour to keep you informed of any future changes as promptly as possible.

The next few weeks will be critical . Things are going to change for the worse very rapidly. I urge you to put your family first and stay in as much as possible to reduce the spread of transmission. We all **MUST** do everything we can to save lives.

Keeping you all in my thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Mc Mullan

Principal

Key Worker List as identified by the Education Minister

1. Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector.
2. Education and childcare. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response.
3. Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles.
4. Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response.
5. Utilities and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal.
6. Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical etc.)
7. Other workers essential to delivering key public services.
8. Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

APPLICATION FOR CHILDCARE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF KEY WORKERS

Please email your response to smcmullan745@c2kni.net by 9:00 am Monday 23rd March, with the following information included:

Child(ren)'s Names: _____

KEY WORKER ROLES

Parent One – Name and Role: _____

Parent Two – Name and Role: _____

Alternatively, please confirm your key worker role as a single parent

Name and Role: _____

If possible, please note any particular considerations the school should be aware of if we are in a position where we need to manage who can access this offer of childcare support.

We STRONGLY underline the fact that, given the timeframe, this provision will not be in place for Monday 23rd March 2020. Please provide us with up-to-date contact details, particularly if grandparents can no longer be listed as one of the priority contacts during this period.

Contact Details: _____

Please let us know what days child care are required over the next two weeks if possible. This will help us plan staff cover.

Date childcare required	P1-3 9am- 2pm	P4-7 9am- 3pm
Wednesday 25 th		
Thursday 26 th		
Friday 27 th		
Monday 30 th		
Tuesday 31 st		
Wednesday 1 st April		
Thursday 2 nd		
Friday 3 rd		