



4<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

This letter is being sent on behalf of the three maintained special schools – The Bridge, Haughton and Southall.

You will be aware that we had the expectation that all children would be returning to school at the beginning of this term and working safely within the context of our COVID-19 risk assessments for our schools with all the measures in place.

However, it has been well reported in the media over the weekend that there has been a legal challenge to the government from many unions working with school staff. The view is held by the unions that staff and also children are not fully safe in school due to:

- the new variant of Covid 19
- the rising numbers of people with positive test results for Covid 19 (including a significant increase in children)
- testing not being fully established
- SAGE recommendations not being followed by the government.

Union members across the country have been told to exercise their described legal right to a safe workplace and to request not to teach/work in full classes, but to support the most vulnerable children linked to safety and the children of key workers in the classroom.

The three schools have received letters from some staff citing union recommendations and, therefore, alongside other staff absence e.g., positive cases, isolation due to contact with positive cases, isolations prior to medical treatment, non-covid related absence, it is not possible to have all children on site for face-to-face teaching.

The advice from the unions is that the position of their members is reviewed after two weeks, week ending 15<sup>th</sup> January.

We have also been advised by Unions that Head Teachers and Governors must ensure that staff and children are safe in the context of the school risk assessment. Our risk assessment is guided by the LA with local Health and Safety advice and local Public Health Advice. The risk assessment needs to be updated to take account of the new Covid 19 variant and the Sage recommendations and any other relevant advice.

We are currently awaiting the updated information to inform our review of our risk assessments and to determine any further measures that may be required. We hope to have this process completed this week. This will then inform our way forward.

It is with sincere regret that the three schools, for this week, will not be able to have all children in school. Where there is capacity, the three schools will be:

- Providing Key Worker places, linked to the categories provided by the government in Summer term. Priority will be given, if necessary, to health, care and education staff.
- Providing places for children, who through liaison with the LA Services, are felt to need a place linked primarily to safety.

- The remainder of the children will need to stay at home and support and advice will be given for home learning by teachers.

For the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> January, we anticipate we will be in the same situation. However, we are hoping that the school risk assessments will have been re-assessed and we may be able to increase the numbers of children on site. However, we need to continue to assess against the advice given and the national and local information.

We hoped that we would not be in this situation. We know that some parents/carers may be relieved as they wish to have their children at home due to rising case numbers and new variant risks, but we are also aware that this may cause significant concerns for other parents / carers. The LA have confirmed that parents / carers wanting to keep their children at home will not be fined. We know some parents / carers will want their children in school and will find it disappointing their child is not accessing face-to-face education. We know for all parents and carers that this situation brings challenge and pressure. We all hope that the situation will change positively and quickly.

We would ask any parent that has pressures to contact Family Connect on 01952 385385 or school on contact numbers for your child's school.

For a local authority stance please read the below link:

[http://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/News/Details/15583?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/News/Details/15583?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

Yours sincerely

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### **HAUGHTON SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

During today, the leadership team will be telephoning parents/carers for those that are registered as key workers and for those children classified as our most vulnerable. We will check if you wish to take up the offer of a placement during partial opening.

All children that are required to work from home will be provided with a remote learning pack. Class Teachers will be in contact with you regarding this.

**Please note that the provision for our children in the Hubs at Hollinswood and Old Park Schools remain unaffected and the children are to attend school on a fulltime basis.**

Once again, I thank you for your patience and continued support during these challenging times.

Kind Regards,

Gill.

Gill Knox

Head Teacher