



Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to update you about provision across the Partnership. I would like to begin by thanking you for your support when we made the very difficult decision on Sunday that we would be unable to open the Partnership for all pupils from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January. This has obviously been followed by a further national lockdown requiring schools to open for vulnerable children and those of keyworkers. We have moved to remote learning for all other pupils.

I am currently in the process of reviewing our provision for both pupils who are at home learning remotely and how we can safely accommodate eligible pupils in school. We have had an exceptionally high demand for keyworker provision. Although only a small amount of families requested school places during the March lockdown, this time around, many more families have requested a place for their children, with particularly large class sizes for some year groups. Our classrooms are physically very different which means the number of pupils we can safely accommodate varies across the Partnership. All teachers are currently teaching groups of pupils. This is again very different to the situation in March. I am concerned that we will continue to get requests for places and we will not be able to accommodate everybody safely. Whilst understandable, requests for part time places also create an additional logistical challenge for us. I also need to balance the provision those in school and at home are receiving.

In the first instance, after further guidance from West Berkshire Council today, I have worked with my senior leadership team and governors to create a priority list for school places:

Families where:

1. Children are considered **vulnerable** – Your child has an Education Health Care Plan, looked after children or your family has been allocated a social worker.
2. The parent works in school.
3. **Both** parents are keyworkers (or **one** in a single-parent household) We reserve the right to ask for evidence from employers.
4. Children the headteacher has deemed as vulnerable.
5. Either parent's employer can justify how their role is **critical to the COVID-19 or EU transition response** (this includes jobs such as frontline healthcare, policing and those working within a school environment).

6. Either parent's employment is **listed on the government list**. We reserve the right to ask for evidence from employers.

I will continue to review class lists and in year groups where numbers are higher or classroom space makes social distancing more challenging, we may have to begin using our priority list to allocate places. We will contact you by phone if this is the case. If having read this letter you feel you no longer require your school place please contact the relevant school office.

We have also reviewed the provision for the majority of pupils that are learning from home. A letter has been emailed out separately and I will also be hosting a Zoom meeting at 4.30pm on Friday evening. I do appreciate that this is an incredibly stressful time for many families as you continue to juggle many aspects of life. We want to do all we can to support all of our families through this third lockdown. To quote the Prime Minister again from his address to the nation on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021, "Now, more than ever, we must pull together." I completely understand how tough this is and how frustrated you are, and we want to work with you to protect our school and the wider community from the virus. Everyone at Parsons Down very much appreciates your support during this difficult time.

With my very best wishes to you all,



Mrs Catherine Bull  
Headteacher  
Parsons Down Partnership of Schools