

11th May 2020

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know the school's current position on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in light of last night's Government briefing but first and foremost, and on behalf of all Riverside School staff, we want you to know how much we are missing your children and we hope that you and your families are all OK during these challenging times. We also hope that you have felt supported, as much as possible, through the contact you have had with your child's class team, whether this has been through telephone contact, email, activity ideas or other means. It remains really important for us as a school that you are receiving the type of support that makes the biggest difference to you and your child and if there are other ways in which we can support you at this time, please do let us know.

We have continued to add content and resources to our website and following your feedback about the range of videos produced by a number of school staff, these are now being added to our website for you to share with your child. Please visit

<https://www.riversideschool.org.uk/page/?title=Coronavirus+Home+Resources&pid=235>

In my letter dated 15th April, I referred to the fact that some families had asked about the possibility of children coming into school and as outlined in the letter, all subsequent requests were formally assessed using the Local Authority's Collaborative Risk Assessment Model. It has always been really important to us that all decisions are made in an open and transparent way. For families who asked us to consider their child coming into school, we looked at a range of potential risks and advantages of the child being at home compared to the potential risks and advantages of the child being at school. These included safeguarding risks, as well as physical and emotional health risks to both the child and the family and these were balanced with the prevailing government and medical advice that "every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading" and "the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society".

As you will know, from the start of the Coronavirus outbreak, the government asked schools "to provide childcare for a limited number of children – those who are particularly vulnerable and those whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home" and we have done this from the start of the formal school closure programme (23rd March). Since then, we have remained open, throughout term-time and the Easter holidays, including the last Bank Holiday on 8th May for children in the categories above.

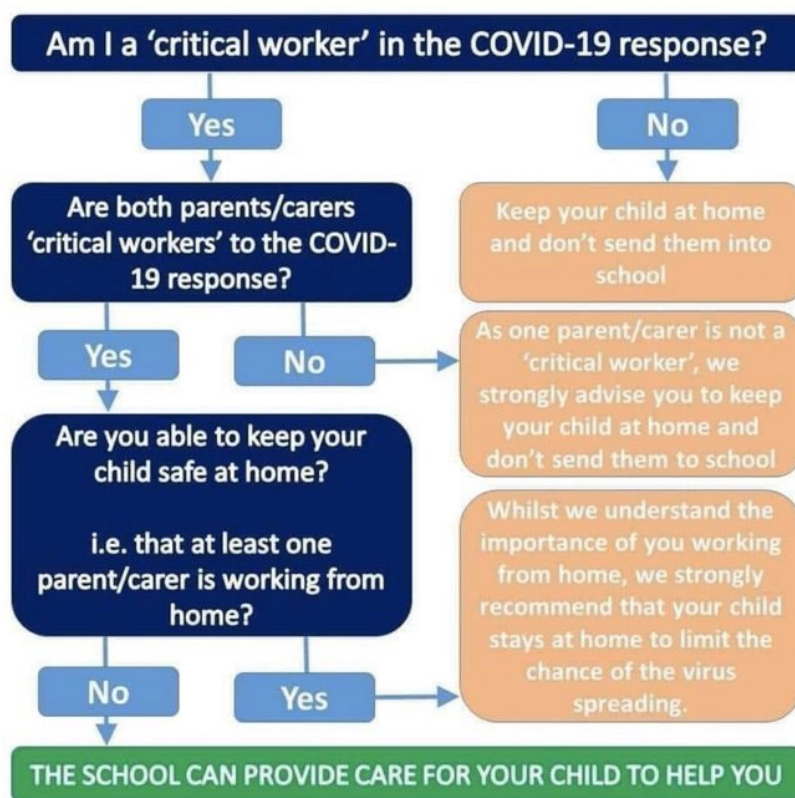
We have always felt that it is our responsibility to support all our families in a number of different ways and we fully acknowledge that circumstances can change regularly. We have

therefore been reviewing our support offer for individual families on a weekly, and case-to-case basis. If your circumstances have changed and you would like us to consider whether or not it is appropriate for your child to come into school after half term, in any capacity, we would ask you to outline:

- the potential risks / advantages of your child being at home;
- the potential risks / advantages of your child being at school.

Please share these with your child's class teacher by email by Friday 15th May and we will be back in touch by Friday 22nd May.

If you are a keyworker critical to the COVID-19 response and have no other means to keep your child safe at home, please let your child's class teacher know if you would like your child to be considered for school-based support. Please see the diagram below for clarity around this process:



There has been a lot of speculation recently about schools reopening on a more formal basis and I am sure you will have seen last night's government briefing. At this stage, there remains a lack of clarity about how schools are expected to operate, although reference was made in the briefing to Mainstream Primary schools prioritising children in their Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 6. As an all-aged special school, there has been no directive to prioritise these year groups and we also feel that requests for school-based support should be considered on a needs-led basis, rather than simply confined to three different year groups. Should further guidance be issued around the prioritisation of key groups later in the school term we will, of course, respond accordingly. At this stage, we have already identified Riverside School leavers as a group that we

would like to prioritise and further details about these arrangements will be sent out in due course.

Many of you will have received my letter last week outlining the process for our upcoming annual reviews, originally scheduled for 22nd May. These will affect approximately 50% of the school population and will be held remotely during the week beginning 18th May. Preparations are underway for these reviews and teachers will be working on these during the weeks of 18th and 25th May. This will mean that you will not receive the same level of direct contact, nor weekly activity sheets for these two weeks so that our teachers have the time to focus on annual reviews. We would like to thank you in advance for your understanding.

We would also like to remind you that if you require additional support from social care colleagues, please contact the Bromley Children's Disability Team on 020 8313 4511 or email disabledchildrensteam@bromley.gov.uk. If your child has medical needs and you require any additional support from our nursing colleagues, please contact them on 0300 330 5777 and if you require other forms of practical assistance, please see: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/requestforassistanceform>

The school will be closed for all pupils for half term week (25th – 29th May) so that we can carry out essential maintenance works as well as deep cleaning in preparation for the second half of term. At this stage, I don't think that anyone really knows what the next couple of months will bring and we will continue to follow government and medical advice as it applies to our pupil population. We will also continue to ensure that our decision-making is open and transparent, our communication is clear and we will always aim to do the right thing, for the right reasons, at the right time.

Finally, we want to reiterate our commitment to the safety of your children, the Riverside School community and wider society and we thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times. You really are doing an incredible job at home and we, like you, look forward to welcoming all your children back to school, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Solomons
Headteacher