

Friday 8th January 2021



RE: Remote learning and access for Key Worker and Vulnerable pupils

Dear Parent/ Carer

Firstly, a huge thank you to all of our families who have this week made selfless and responsible choices that have enabled our schools to very swiftly transition into their new role.

As I am certain you are aware our schools are now trying to balance the dual challenge of providing face-to-face school for all those children of Key Workers and children deemed as Vulnerable as well as providing high quality remote education. It would be an understatement to say that this has been a challenge. Despite this, thanks to your support and some amazing staff we are up and running. Across our schools our remote offer has really high levels of engagement and initial feedback is very positive – albeit allowing for a few technical issues. Further, although we have seen much increased demand for places in school, we have also managed to provide places for everybody who has requested one and is eligible.

However, the balance is a fine one and if we are going to be able to continue to meet the challenge of providing a remote education and managing higher numbers of pupils in our schools in a manner which is both high quality and fair to both groups we are going to need your support.

At our schools we have grouped the pupils into year group bubbles, with the teaching and support staff in each group responsible for maintaining both the online and face-to-face offer. This obviously has the advantage of keeping children in their year groups and in consistent 'bubbles' and also means that they will continue to receive their education from the staff in their year group.

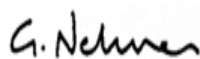
Therefore, we have assessed how many pupils we can reasonably have in each group at school whilst maintaining a safe environment and meeting the needs of both groups. If we have to provide face-to-face provision for pupils beyond this number, we do not feel that we will be able to meet the needs fairly for all pupils. At Stafford Leys, we judge the capacity in each year group to be 20, or around 120 across the school. We are currently very close to this figure. If we look like we are consistently going to go beyond our capacity in any group, we are going to be forced into some very tough choices. However, if possible, we would prefer to work with our families and avoid the awful situation of having to prioritise or scrutinise our Key Worker families or compromise our remote offer. We feel that our best chance of succeeding over the coming weeks is not to produce endless lists of rules or to start to question and police our families. We believe that our best course of action is to be honest with you about the challenges we are facing and hope that you will support us by only using the face-to-face offer when it is truly needed. **We will pledge to do everything we can to provide the best possible education for your children during this period, please help us by only taking a Key Worker or Vulnerable child place if you genuinely require it.**

Further, despite everyone's best efforts there may inevitably come a point where, due to circumstances beyond anyone's control such as staff shortages, we may be compromised in our efforts to provide both face-to-face education and our online offer. At this point we will exhaust all staffing options to try and maintain our planned provision. But, if we reach a situation where we have very limited staffing we may need to consider, and only for a very limited period, our provision for our Key Worker and Vulnerable pupils also going online. We will absolutely try to avoid this but thought being 'up-front' about the possibility was the most honest way forward. For further transparency we also would like you to know that we have taken the decision not to use any temporary supply staff who are unknown to us during this period.

We know how difficult this is and we genuinely want to do our best by your children and by our staff. This letter is in no way intended to deter the children of our amazing Key Workers or those children who genuinely need to be in school from attending. There should be no guilt about those eligible taking up their place, we just wanted to be honest with you about the balancing act we are trying to achieve and how we will need some support, compromise and understanding from you in the coming weeks and months. In return we promise to listen, adapt and do the absolute best we can.

Thank you, as ever, for your support.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Nelmes
Chief Executive Officer



Dean Pomeroy
Director of Schools