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Friday 20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Coronavirus update: Schools closed to the majority of pupils after today

Government advice is being updated on a daily basis at the moment and our schools are working quickly to make sense of new information as it comes out. Once again, I wish to start by paying tribute to our school leaders and other staff: they are working in unprecedented conditions and are planning hard to resolve quite a complex puzzle which has been left before us. They are rising to this as they wish to contribute purposefully to the national Covid-19 effort and to keep our children and staff safe.

In light of the latest Government guidance, I am writing to further clarify the position around school closures: **schools are closed after today to the majority of pupils until further notice.**

Currently, schools are working to determine which pupils will be invited to come to school to be looked after from Monday. There are two broad categories here: those that the school considers to be most vulnerable and those whose parents are 'key workers' and are therefore critical to the national Covid-19 response.

It is a difficult task for schools to identify this group of pupils and they will hold to this principle: **if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.**

As our schools work this out today, they will be balancing parents' needs against their current reduced staffing levels whilst also ensuring that we hold to the core intention: to support the most critical workers and the most vulnerable children.

The latest guidance today confirms that schools can also consider families where only one of the parents is a critical worker and we welcome this flexibility. **However, as schools work through this, they must prioritise carefully and they will be giving greater weight to those families where both parents are critical to the national Covid-19 response.**

This is going to be a challenge for everyone: schools and parents alike. However, like never before, your schools need the patience, understanding and positive support of their parents. It will almost certainly not be possible to agree to every parent's request and we are asking parents to trust that their schools are making the best decisions that they can for the right reasons.

On a final practical note, as early as possible during the course of today, schools will contact families to confirm whether or not they have been invited to come to school on Monday. Parents are reminded that this is an offer and, if they have alternative arrangements, they do not have to accept. Either way, it is important that you confirm your position with the school.

We will write again later on the subject of free school meals.

My very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Howieson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Paul Howieson
CEO, Coastal Learning Partnership