

20 March 2020

Dear parents and carers

Re: School Closure due to Coronavirus

**I open this letter by reinforcing the government's key message that children, parents and carers must continue to follow the advice with regards to self-isolation for those who have symptoms of infection, or where there are underlying health conditions. This overrides any information outlined below.**

The government announced on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March that all schools would close at the end of the school day on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March until further notice. All WeST schools are following this instruction.

However, the government has also determined that some schools, where possible, would reopen on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March to provide 'Edu-care' for the children of 'key workers and (those who are) vulnerable'. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be. We have been informed that the key worker list constitutes:

- Children who have a final EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan) - Children who have a Social Worker including those on Child Protection or with a Child in Need Plan.
- Children who have a parent who is a key worker, and who has no other parent or suitable adult to care for them at home. This includes the following:
  - NHS staff
  - Teaching and Nursery staff
  - Members of the emergency services
  - Those essential to running the justice system
  - Workers involved in the production, processing and distribution of food
  - Those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response

Please note that these parents should bring their children to school only when they need to – i.e. because they are at work and have no other suitable adult available to care for them.

We may ask for proof of occupation. Given that the key thrust of the government strategy is to prevent the further spread of the virus we need to keep the size of our 'social gathering' to the minimum required, and thereby reduce the risk of spreading infection.

It is WeST's intention to adopt a two-stage strategy.

**STRONGER TOGETHER... EVERY CHILD IN A GREAT SCHOOL**

Stage one, commencing Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, will see 20 WeST schools opening to provide 'Edu-care' for eligible children during the school day. This arrangement will continue until Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March. We intend to continue this provision for eligible children through the Easter break and will provide further details of this next week.

Stage 2 is likely to commence after the Easter break and will see WeST adopt a more strategic approach by adopting a hub model for provision but within reach of local communities. The aim will be to continue 'Edu-care' provision for eligible children but with the expectation that we are likely to experience a significant shortfall in staffing due to illness or self-isolation. At all times the aim is to keep children safe, healthy and prevent the spread of the virus, so we know it is essential that the schools we use are thoroughly cleaned each day.

Details of stage 2 will be shared as we move nearer to this phase of provision.

It is highly likely that children, whilst in 'Edu-care', will be organised in mixed age groups and will be cared for by a combination of teachers, TAs and other school staff. The day will be structured differently in each school depending on the staff and physical resource available. Children will not be following the national curriculum but will be engaged in a variety of child care activities which could include e-learning. Further details on our planning for this will follow.

I fully appreciate that this is a worrying and challenging time for everyone. I am sure you will appreciate schools having to respond to change on a daily basis at the moment, relying on the same information, at the same time as it is being given to the general public. We do appreciate your patience and will pass on what we know as soon as we are able to do so. We will continue to remain in close contact throughout the period of closure, however long that may be, and will always be here to help and support you and your children.

I wish you and your families well, and as the Prime Minister says, we will come through this together.

Rob Haring  
CEO