



## **DALE HOUSE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL**

13<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents

As you know, England has entered a third national lockdown announced on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January and Primary and Secondary schools have closed for everyone except the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Stand-alone Early Years and Nurseries are open to all. Where the nursery is attached to school the rules are different. We would expect those children identified as vulnerable to attend school. For all others, the best action for you to take for your child, yourself and the whole community is to keep your child at home if it is safe to do so.

We continue to be vigilant and to encourage everyone to follow the national guidance. The infection rate increased in our area and continues to rise. We must all continue to follow the lockdown rules to help NHS Hospitals to continue to function for all of us. In time, vaccinations will provide us all with hope but we must remain strong and determined at this point in time.

The Government guidance allows for the children of critical workers to be in school. However, the most recent guidance broadens the definitions of critical workers and, consequently, increases the number of children who may be seeking a place in school as compared to previous phases in the pandemic. Headteachers must use their discretion to keep both staff and pupils safe. Consequently, School is under increased pressure and we would ask that you do all you can to support us by keeping children at home if you can. The safety of your child and the staff is the school's number one priority and all school decisions about school places will be guided by this.

For some of you, we understand that your work is of such critical importance that your child absolutely must be in school. However, if you qualify as a critical worker, but can manage to have your children at home, please do this, and let us know. Government guidance published on 7 January reinforces this point. It says, "Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can."

Government guidance also says that there should be a place for all children of critical workers "who need to attend." We know that many of you are in families where both parents are involved in frontline work that takes you out of the house and where your work is essential in the fight against Covid-19. Where this is not the case, we would urge you only to send children to school if absolutely necessary. This would greatly help our school and our local effort if those children stayed at home and accessed the school's remote learning offer

together with work packs provided. The National Oak Academy is being used by many private and state funded schools countrywide and comes at the recommendation of the Government. The lessons are taught by expert teachers and the resources used and tasks set are excellent. As a staff body, following the last lockdown period we discussed with our pupils which digital platforms they liked best to work with at home. The majority agreed the National Oak Academy followed by BBC Bitesize, which has this week announced they will be providing more daily work for pupils. Both these platforms can be accessed, at any time outside of school hours, which makes it easier for parents to facilitate their children's learning.

Your cooperation will help school reduce potential transmission of Covid-19 by minimising the numbers on site and to ensure staff have the capacity to support the learning for all other pupils. Each school will have undertaken a health and safety risk assessment and will know the maximum number of pupils they are able to have safely on site at any one time, given the number of staff they have available.

We do ask that you support school during this challenging time. We are having to make very difficult decisions about how to balance the number of children and staff in school to reduce transmission. That means that not everyone who meets the criteria for attending school in person will be able to have a place.

Thank you for your understanding in what we recognise is a very difficult situation for everyone. We recognise that this will cause considerable disruption to your personal and working lives. Like you, we wish our children could be in school for the sake of their education and well-being. We really do appreciate the pressure this situation places on all of us, but we are acting amid a pandemic. We hope the progress with vaccinations means we can see a brighter future ahead and so there is hopefully an end in sight.

We will of course continue to keep all arrangements under constant review as we progress our response through this period of lockdown and beyond. Our best wishes to you all, please stay safe.

**Mrs Fletcher**  
**Headmistress**