



North Tyneside Council

Education, Learning and Skills
Early Years and School Improvement Service
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This matter was dealt with by D Buckle

Letter to Parent/Carers from the Assistant Director for Education

8th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

We recognise that it has been a difficult start to the new school term for you and your children. We would always want our children and young people to be in school wherever possible, as we know the long-term impact extended periods of absence can have on emotional, social and academic development. However, the exponential rise in infection rates across the country has led to the closure of schools once again. Our schools will now be closed until February half term, in the first instance. Headteachers have been required to make sweeping organisational changes with very short notice. This is not an easy task and is difficult for all.

We also appreciate the demands of home working and home schooling are incredibly stressful. While we firmly believe our schools are safe places to be it is important that within our communities, we are all playing our part to minimise contacts to protect our NHS and save lives, with the overriding message to stay at home if you can.

Government policy indicates that schools will remain open for critical workers. Our headteachers will work with you to identify who needs to go to school. It may be that headteachers ask for evidence to that effect.

'schools can ask for simple evidence that the parent in question is a critical worker, such as their work ID badge or pay slip. Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.'

A school's unique circumstances within which our schools operate may mean that some will have more pupils attending than others. This is very much the same across the country.

All children and young people working at home will receive a remote learning offer. Our schools are working hard to provide high quality remote learning materials and

to minimise lost learning. Again, this may look different in different schools depending upon approaches chosen.

You may have heard the Secretary of State for Education announce further devices will be issued to schools, for those families who struggle to access internet resources easily. This will take time to be fulfilled, as school must wait to be invited to apply for their allocation of devices in order to manage the supply chain.

Schools are also beginning the process of mass testing. This will start with pupils from Year 7 onwards and is a huge undertaking. We would urge you to provide consent for your child to be tested as and when required. This will provide a further element in our battle to reduce the spread of the virus.

We are ever hopeful that we can re-open our schools very soon welcoming back all our children and young people.

Thank you for your continued support in such challenging times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane Buckle".

Diane Buckle
Assistant Director for Education