



Tuesday 24th March 2020

Re. Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Dear Parents and Carers,

This letter follows the Government action taken yesterday (23rd March 2020) to restrict all nonessential travel and the decision taken on the 20th March 2020 to close all early years' settings, schools and colleges. Both decisions have been taken as part of the Government's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. This is a direct intervention to reduce the spread of the disease and to prevent unnecessary deaths. The Government has directed early years settings, schools and colleges to remain open to provide support to vulnerable children and their families and for people identified as critical to managing the outbreak of the virus.

I need to make it clear that school closures are critical to reduce the spread of the virus to a level the NHS can cope with. This is essential to save lives. If a substantial number of children continue to attend school this will unravel this initiative and make this pandemic likely. The Government have also stated that all non-essential travel must be stopped.

Children of Critical Workers

Schools are remaining open only to the children of workers critical to the ongoing management of Covid-19 who are unable to safely stay at home. We need to ensure that the number of children and young people accessing the offer of provision at Rackham is kept to the lowest number possible. Therefore, even if you have been deemed a critical worker, if your children can remain at home rather than attend school, on some or all days, then they should. Please only use the offer of provision when it is crucial for you to undertake your critical role. If we feel that your role does not fit the critical worker criteria, you may be asked to keep your children at home. If you have a partner who is not a critical worker, you may be questioned as to why they are not able to stay at home as per the Government's guidance. Our school is tasked with remaining open to enable critical workers to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. I ask for all Rackham parents and carers to support Rackham in this endeavour and only use this offer of support if you have no alternatives for your child(ren).

Government Advice re Leaving Children Unattended

There is no law about when you can leave your child on their own but it is an offence to leave them alone if it places them at risk. As parents, you should use your judgement on how mature your child is before you decide to leave them at home.

If you are at all unsure, the NSPCC recommends that children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time, children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight and babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.

It is important to note that schools, settings and colleges are not able to provide an education offer to those child(ren) coming into school during this crisis. The provision is a care facility only. All usual education activity has been suspended in all schools during this emergency period. I understand that educating your children at home is a very tall order and is extremely difficult, but sending pupils into school is not a solution. I attach a letter from Mrs. Ward about home learning activities with some further advice regarding your role as educators at home.

As Headteacher at Rackham, it is difficult to write a letter of this nature. We are facing the biggest danger this country has confronted for decades. An invisible, indiscriminate and largely undetectable killer. It's vital to slow the spread of the disease; to reduce the number of people needing hospital treatment to save more lives. We all have shared social responsibility to stop the disease spreading between households. Rackham staff are asked to support critical/key workers by coming into school. They are being exposed to the very risk that our nation, and most of the world, have been directed to avoid and they are expected to carry out this duty with no personal protective equipment and no support or guidance from Government. Our staff are willing and happy to do this so that the national Covid-19 response can be effective. We understand how crucial our role is in this. I was pleased to hear that supermarket staff, transport workers, carers, nurses and doctors on the frontline were all thanked in the Prime Minister's speech yesterday. However I was so disheartened to hear that the education sector was overlooked. Please do not overlook my staff. I urge you to support them at this time of national emergency by only sending your children to school if there is absolutely no other option. The fewer children in school, the more children I can protect and the more staff I can instruct to stay at home and protect themselves and their families. The health and safety of your children and your family is everyone's first priority. Thank you for your co-operation at this time.

I will continue to share stories and collective worship sessions with the pupils at Rackham and our teachers will continue to provide meaningful learning activities and support for you all from home. Please be mindful about asking questions related to homelearning tasks on social media platforms. I know it is an easy and quick way to communicate, but we must ensure all queries and communications are handled professionally via the class teachers email addresses.

All of our pupils and their families are in our thoughts at this difficult time. We remain stronger than ever as a community and should be proud of all our ongoing efforts.

Stay safe,

