

10/03/2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Our school, as you are all well aware, closed to students on the evening of Tuesday 17th March because we were operationally unable to continue to safely support the education of all of our students.

Last night, Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary announced that as from Monday 23rd March 2020 all schools will be also be closed to students except for:-

- Children and young people with an EHCP;
- Children and young people with a social worker.
- Children of key workers who can otherwise not be supervised during the school day.

In theory, this would mean that our school would re-open. Although I understand the rationale behind this, I am personally very worried about the **safety** and **health** of our children.

In order to provide a **safe** environment for our students, we need high ratios of well trained, medically competent, experienced staff who understand the multi-faceted nature of working with students who have social, emotional, physical, behavioural, medical and learning needs. With staff illness and their own vulnerabilities, I cannot guarantee the same high student to teacher ratios that we need to safely meet the needs of the students.

I am also concerned about the potential risk to the **health** of our children - If we take the Government advice issued earlier in the week all of our children, by the very nature of our school, have an underlying health condition that makes them vulnerable. This virus is serious; it must be or the Government would not be taking such extreme steps. All of our children are vulnerable based upon the definition provided in the guidance below, and as such need to be protected. The guidance below says that 'Any member of vulnerable group with an underlying medical condition' is strongly advised against social mixing in the community and is strongly advised to undertake home working.

My specific concerns are based upon:-

- 1) How will your son / daughter get to school? – in a mini-bus or taxi that is also used on a daily basis by the general public?
- 2) How can we manage to keep a social distance in a school? This means keeping 2m apart from anyone else. Our students are very 'sociable' – some have no concept of personal space!! By the very nature of Blackfriars, we cannot socially isolate.
- 3) Your children are having close 1:1 personal contact with our staff, particularly if they need physical management, enteral feeds, personal care and, other than gloves, we have no personal protective equipment. Staff working with your children are going home and mixing with their families, they are having limited social contact but they are, in general, having to do things such as shop for their families. Some people have

Principal: Alison Parr

Priory Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2TF

Tel: 01782 987 151 | Email: admin@blackfriars.shaw-education.org.uk | Web: www.set-mat.co.uk

Chief Executive Officer: Jo Morgan, Shaw Education Trust

The Lodge, Wolstanton High school, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 9JU

Tel: 01782 742910

no symptoms with this disease and therefore we cannot guarantee that there is no risk of the virus being carried by staff.

- 4) Whether we will be able to ensure that the key staff that know your child well are going to be in school every day

So, in summary, I believe the best course of action is for our school to remain closed. If you are a Key Worker, as defined by the Cabinet Office or have a looked after child, could you please contact us to see what we can arrange to support you. We will be co-ordinating this support from Wednesday 25th March, it is therefore very important that you contact us by 12 noon Monday 23rd March to ensure that we have the right staffing and transport in place to support your child. Please email admin@blackfriars.shaw-education.org.uk or ring school 01782 987151 during school hours.

If you require support with providing food for your child whilst they are at home, please contact school and we will arrange for you to have a supermarket voucher or a parcel from our Foodbank.

Your class teacher will have been in touch with work and activities to do with your child during this period of school closure. We have also put a list of educational activities on the school website for you to access.

Please see below from the Government guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Summary of advice

Group/Action	Wash hands more often	Household isolation for 14 days*	Self-isolation for 7 days**	Social mixing in the community***	Having friends and family to the house	Use remote access to NHS and essential services****	Vary daily commute and use less public transport	Home working
0 – 69	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advised against	Advised against	Advised	Advised	Advised
70+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Any age Member of vulnerable group with an underlying health condition ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Pregnant women	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Those with serious underlying health conditions	As above, but further bespoke guidance will be provided by the NHS next week							

Principal: Alison Parr
 Priory Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2TF
Tel: 01782 987 151 | **Email:** admin@blackfriars.shaw-education.org.uk | **Web:** www.set-mat.co.uk

Chief Executive Officer: Jo Morgan, Shaw Education Trust
 The Lodge, Wolstanton High school, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 9JU
Tel: 01782 742910

Clearly, this is a fast moving picture and we will endeavour to do all that we can to keep you updated. Please do not feel that you are alone in the coming weeks, staff will be in contact weekly and you can always get in touch with school at any point. The email to use to contact school if you are a key worker / require information about food etc is: admin@blackfriars.shaw-education.org.uk

Thanking you all in advance for your support, the messages that we have received have been quite overwhelming. Please stay safe and well and we will keep in touch by phone,

Kind regards,



Alison Parr
Principal