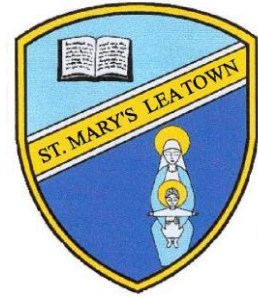


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*'Happy are those who hear the word of
God and keep it' Luke 11.28*

Tuesday 5th of January 2021

Provision throughout Lockdown – January 2021

Dear Parent/ Carer,

As you will be aware from our school previous communication, driven by safety advice from School Unions, I shared that St. Mary's school would be closed except to those pupils of Keyworkers and those deemed Vulnerable. Last night the Government announced that all Schools would close and remain closed until at least February half term. As a school we now have reviewed our Risk Assessments liaised with the Local Authority and made plans appropriate and specific to St. Mary's School. As I have shared in the past what is decided for one school will not necessarily be right for another. Schools must consider all factors – Health and safety, space and physical environment, wellbeing, demand and reach the best possible decisions to support the needs of their unique setting. We are a small unique school. I thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

With immediate effect school will only be open for pupils whose parents/carers are key workers (KW) and those deemed vulnerable children (VC) "KW/ VC Bubble". In order to ensure we have a safe environment we have a strict number of places available for our KW/VC Bubble. I will offer a maximum of 15 places only.

Below I have detailed some of the key aspects you may wish to seek clarity on.

Why are only 15 places available ?

In order to make sure the KW/VC Bubble is as safe as possible I have to consider many factors – Staffing levels, ventilation, appropriate spacing of desks and furniture to ensure Social Distancing can be observed, Needs of all pupils attending from every year groups, needs of vulnerable children. These decisions are not taken lightly and many factors are reflected on and assessed. We are working hard to reduce the spread of the virus and so must adhere strictly to our Risk Assessment. Our provision is delivered in the hall.

Other schools offer more than 15 places, why has St. Mary's only offered 15?

As I have shared above the decisions and plans must be unique to each school. Every school is very different; different size/ space, different staffing levels, different combination of full and part time staff, different pupil needs/ vulnerable pupils and each decision must be made at a school level.

I am key worker will I automatically get a place for my child ?

The simplest answer is No. As you can imagine demand for places is high. The Government produced a list of 'Key Workers' and this list is vast. The demand for places is higher than the 15 we have available. As a school we will apply a process to allocating KW/ VC places which is detailed below. This will ensure we are being as fair as we can.

- Both parents must be deemed as a 'Key Worker'
- Both parents must provide evidence of their role and of their shift patterns. A place will only be allocated when both parents are working and numbers/places permit.
- Places will only be booked ONE week at a time and shift patterns must be emailed to Head@lea-st-marys.lancs.sch.uk each Friday morning from 8.30 am
- Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis
- Priority will be given to NHS staff, those deemed vulnerable and all other places will be allocated accordingly
- We ask that if you are able to work from home you support your child with Home learning so we can allocate the places to those who have no alternative.

NB: Places cannot be booked in advance for forthcoming week's Allocation one week does not automatically guarantee places in future weeks.

My Child has Special Educational needs and is Vulnerable, will I automatically get a place?

Again, the simplest answer is No. Places are offered to those deemed vulnerable for many reasons. Special Educational / Additional Needs do not automatically make a person vulnerable. Many factors will be considered such as wellbeing, ability to cope in the KW/VC Bubble- this is a very different setting – one large room, with desks, limited resources, any child protection matters etc.

We will offer places to those pupils we feel would benefit- this may be in the form of one day, two days etc. and may be each week or less frequently again depending on the specific needs of the pupil.

I am not a Key Worker- what learning will be provided for my child/ children ?

We have worked incredibly hard to further develop our online/ remote learning and will continue to review and develop this in a constantly changing environment. All pupils can access learning from our School website under the 'Pupils' pages. This learning will be produced weekly, will cover different subject areas and be linked to the National curriculum. Some resources will be created by our staff, some produced via Oak Academy and / or other links such as Espresso and BBC Bitesize to name a few. Our staff have worked incredibly hard and will accompany these plans with videos to explain and give examples. We would love for you to share examples of your child's learning at home and we will celebrate this. At present we do not wish to offer 'live' zoom chats as such in line with E-safety and safeguarding.

The same online learning is shared within the KW/VC Bubble and those pupils who are attending school do not receive different learning or additional teaching but work through the same activities within the Bubble setting. As ever, staff are at the end of an email and someone is available in school each day should you wish to discuss your child's learning.

I am worried about my child's wellbeing, what support is available ?

These are challenging times for everyone at present and it is completely understandable that such circumstances can affect how we feel which can change day to day. Just because we may not be physically in school does not mean we are unable to support families. As I have shared staff are available at the other end of an email as am I and we are happy to support you in any way we can.

We have access to our school counsellor and I will be working to source wellbeing resources bespoke to each class as I did in the previous Lock down. Resources and links will be signposted through our website.

I am eligible for free school meals will I receive support?

We will continue to keep you updated as we receive more information. It is expected that Edenred Vouchers will be available as they have previously.

'Share It' food bank based at Holy Family Church have been a fantastic support and any family can self-refer. You DO NOT have to be eligible for Free School meals to request support from the Food bank. Anyone can ask to collect a food hamper.

Will all pupils return to school as normal after the February Half term?

At this stage it is impossible for us to say exactly how long we will have to operate in this way and as ever we will keep you fully updated.

Thank you for taking the time to read all this key information and I trust this helps you to understand the decisions we have made and the great deal of planning that goes into such arrangements. I know I speak for all the staff at St. Mary's when I say we want nothing more than to have our pupils in school learning, thriving and growing but this can only be when is absolutely safe to do so.

Once again, I thank you for your continued support.

Kind Regards

Mrs. A. Brogden
Head Teacher