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20th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

School Update:

As you will know, the national lockdown has been extended for a further 3 weeks.

You are doing an amazing job supporting your children to stay safe at home, in very challenging circumstances, and we want to do all we can to help you at this time.

The government guidance on school closures, supporting vulnerable children and young people and implementing social distancing in education settings have had several updates, though remains mostly unchanged from the beginning of this crisis. The latest advice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

The current Risk assessment conducted by Westminster Special schools and the Local Authority remains in place until Monday 27th April, in the first instance.

Starting today, Monday 20th April, we will review our risk assessments in line with current guidance and with the most up to date information available; from families, from staff and with colleagues in the local authority, health and social care, with whom we continue to work very closely.

The key points from the current guidance and how they impact the Federation are:

If you are at all able to keep your child at home, you should.

Most children and young people with EHC Plans can safely remain at home.

The scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear; if children can stay safely at home - they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Schools have been asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response, where it is safe to do so.

The government has stressed that, if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.

As a provision supporting pupils with Education Health and Care Plans we are working hard to follow guidance and offer support that is safe and sustainable.

The government is advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures and therefore should be at home.

Where a child requires ongoing provision, this may continue to be provided at their current special school, but not always. Local Authorities and schools working together and taking into account parents' views will need to make decisions regarding the provision required to meet the needs of children in their area.

What risk assessment needs to take place?

The majority of Westminster Special School pupils (with EHCPs) can remain safely at home and parents and carers are doing an amazing job supporting children/young people at home, in very challenging circumstances.

Schools and Local Authorities will need to consider the needs of all children with an EHC Plan, alongside the views of their parents, and make a risk assessment. The risks to be considered include the following:

- The potential health risks to the child/young person from COVID-19 keeping in mind their ability to observe the guidance that can protect them and other children/young people e.g. handwashing
- The increased risks due to any underlying health conditions
- The risk to the child/young person if some or all of their EHC Plan cannot be delivered and the risk if this cannot be delivered in the normal manner or usual setting
- The ability of the child's parent/carers to ensure their health and care needs can be met at home
- The potential impact to the child's wellbeing of changes to routine, or in the way the provision is delivered
- The potential health risk to staff from exposure to COVID-19
- The availability and suitability of 'control factors' that we can put into place e.g. the use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), implementing social distancing between anyone at school and travelling to/from school and home

What will happen this week?

Starting today, Monday 20th April, we will review our risk assessments in line with current guidance and with the most up to date information available; from families, from staff and with colleagues in the local authority, health and social care teams, with whom we continue to work very closely.

We will be in touch with all families to see how we can continue to support you at home.

If we are able to offer support in school this will be a reduced offer, the details of which we cannot confirm until we know how many families feel they need this and we have completed the risk assessments:

- *for the schools; e.g. staff availability, transport, PPE*
- *for each individual child/young person e.g. specific care needs, underlying health issues*

This this will not be an education offer, we will not be sticking to specification or curriculum and so there will not be speech and language and OT as per normal offer. It may also mean that we will use agency staff and not the regular staff who know the children.

Any changes made to a child's provision in their EHC plan would only remain in place temporarily until restrictions are lifted.

As well as supporting those with an EHCP, priority goes to those families who are key workers and those with the most complex welfare and safeguarding concerns. We have collected details of key worker families already – and we add our thanks to you for your amazing work at this time to support the national response to COVID-19. If there are any changes in key worker status, please let us know. We will continue to work with colleagues in social care to priorities need/resources, as we understand what you might need.

If you have already expressed an interest in some school provision, we will contact you early this week to discuss the risk assessment for this. If you have not already told us you think you would need to take up an offer, please contact the school office with the following information by 10am on Tuesday 21st April:

Individual school details: 0207 221 3454 / admin@qe2cp.westminster.sch.uk

0207 641 5825 / office@qe2cp.westminster.sch.uk

Your email: (Please provide the email address you would like the school to continue to use)

Your name:

Your child's full name:

What steps are the schools taking to support parents/carers and staff during this period?

We appreciate that is a very difficult time and the stress and burden that places on the family. We also acknowledge the anxiety this causes for the young people, as well as the change in routine for them.

As a Federation we will maintain communication through:

- Email contact with class teachers

- Regular telephone contact
- Online resources available on our website, it is not expected that you do them, but just a guide if you would like to use them
- Contact with social services and health colleagues for vulnerable cases
- Reporting any concerns to social services and health colleagues for extra support

Other help available:

We are in close contact with the community nursing team, SEN departments, short breaks and social care teams and they, along with all parts of the council, are putting together different sorts of support so if you need help with things like:

- shopping
- collecting medication
- managing any health needs at home
- translating information or filling in forms
- support with your care package
- Wifi access or access to a device to support activities at home
- financial support; including free school meals

Free school meals

Free school meal vouchers are only available to families that are already in receipt of free school meals and who have completed the free school meals paperwork.

The new voucher scheme set up for free school meals vouchers is organised by a company called Edenred (please check your email, junk and spam, for any email from them). We know there are some problems with the system and some of you have contacted us and we are working to resolve these. We will check that all those entitled to vouchers have received them and let you know when you can expect the next vouchers.

We understand that some families may now be experiencing hardship due to job loss from COVID-19 and now be entitled to free school meals. Please contact the school office and we will work with the local authority to make any new applications as quickly as possible, we can ask for a check to confirm if you are eligible so please do get in touch if you want us to check that for you.

Many thanks for your ongoing support during this difficult time

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QEII Jubilee School