



Friday, 08 January 2021

Limited Community Opening - Important

Dear Parent,

As we end the week and dust ourselves off, we have set out important guidance for all families that we hope will bring clarity to all whether your child is home learning, currently in school or whether you are debating which option you should take for your child. This letter will take approximately 15 minutes to work through – please read the full contents so you can be confident of school arrangements and expectations.

1. Limited Community Opening – the balancing act – we need your help

As parents may have seen in the news, there is significantly increased demand for school places. At the start of the summer term 2020, during the first limited community opening we had approximately 65 children attending school, as of today we had in excess of 150 (25%+) children. Our estimates suggest maximum eligibility could be as high as @300 children, @ 50% of the school population.

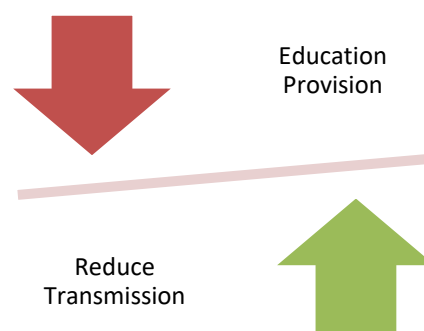
As the diagram opposite clearly indicates there is an imperative to reduce transmission – lower number lower risk for all! However, the risks of significant illness are more likely for school staff compared to children, therefore we are rightly prioritising staff health and well being to ensure we:

- Effectively manage risks for all school staff so they feel confident and safe in the environment in which they work
- sustain effective learning and teaching for children in school and for children learning from home

As pupil numbers increase in school, we know the risk of transmission naturally increases. For children, this is not believed to be a particular concern, so parents should not be worried by this. However, we do have a responsibility to manage risks for school staff effectively. In addition to this, the greater the number of staff required to teach on site means a clear reduction in staff available to plan and communicate the comprehensive online learning package. So, achieving the best possible balance is vital. It relies on everyone in our community recognising the importance of achieving that balance for the benefit of all.

On that basis, with pupil attendance already high and increasing, I am writing to share principles going forwards.

A place should only be accepted by a family for a child when it is absolutely necessary, even when they are eligible.





- By definition, vulnerable child attendance would be considered absolutely necessary; critical worker children may be eligible but it may not be absolutely necessary to attend,

A child should attend full time once a place is accepted

To attend part time

- would not reduce risk notably for the school community
- will significantly impact quality of learning and experience for a child
- will significantly impact the teacher's ability to provide a coherent learning programme in school

Vulnerable Children

1. Our highest priority for school attendance is for children who are deemed vulnerable given this group of children are typically most impacted by school closures.
 - a. Wherever possible, children subject to child protection, managing severe and complex special educational needs (EHCP) or with other significant circumstances should attend on site provision where professional support is available.

Critical worker children

We have and continue to do everything possible to move quickly and welcome all applications from critical worker families in recognition of their contribution to the community through the work they do. As numbers are high, we would ask critical worker families to determine whether even though eligible, it is absolutely necessary for their child to attend school site. The table below sets out a guide to help that decision.

Guide	Attendance
Education support cannot consistently be provided at home each day of the week during this period. i.e. there isn't an adult, that is at home currently, that could provide consistent focused support; or inconsistent work flow or working arrangements means consistent support cannot be maintained by an adult	Child is eligible It is absolutely necessary for the child to attend Child/ children should attend school
Education support can consistently be provided at home each day of the week during this school closure period i.e. there are one or more adults within the family home that could provide consistent effective support.	Child is eligible It is not absolutely necessary for the child to attend Child/ children should remain at home <i>If circumstances change then the decision should be reviewed at that point – a place will always be made available.</i>

As indicated in previous letters, we are incredibly impressed by the selflessness of families in response to requesting a school place or educating at home. This guide is sent to parents to work in partnership and in everyone's best interests to ensure we have the best chance of ensuring all children who should be in school are and all children home learning can do so effectively. If you would like to discuss an individual situation and are not sure whether your child should or should not attend school please email office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk and a member of our team will call to chat



things through.

Class Placement

We cannot guarantee a child will now be placed within their original class with their friends or with their original class teacher. Whilst best endeavours will naturally be made in this regard it simply may not be possible when we also have an upper limit of 16 children within any class space and allocated to a teacher. Clearly there are very difficult decisions to be made on class allocations by teachers and leaders.

It would not be appropriate to seek an early place to increase the chances of a child being placed in a class with their friends when it is not absolutely necessary. We must be guided by the primary task of reducing transmission and with that will come some difficult compromises. Parents are in a position to support this positively with their child and set expectations for them to be resilient in the face of change and challenges.

Critical Workers – Action Needed

If you have not already completed it, please complete our online form, where at least one parent in your household is a critical worker, even if you don't want or need a space.

The online form may be found at:

- HOME > PARENTS > COVID 19 > SPRING 2021 - LIMITED COMMUNITY OPENING

<https://www.chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk/page/?title=Spring+2021+%2D+Limited+Community+Opening&pid=1195&action=saved>

National Guidance on critical worker and vulnerable child definitions:

This is located on the page link above or you may also view it at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

An expectation has been placed on schools to establish which children have at least one parent that undertakes a critical worker role. It needs only to be ONE parent with the critical care worker role.

We are writing to request that every family that has a parent undertaking a critical worker role completes our online form. It should be completed by families, even if you are uncertain whether you would take a place for your child (select 'maybe' on the form) or whether you are certain you will not require a place for your child (select 'no' on the form). As we do not know which families have a critical worker parent without the form being completed, we will assume there isn't a critical worker in the family if a form has not been completed, and we have exhausted all options to establish this through communication with families this week.

This is important as the government has changed the criteria for the children to be provided with a school place and the way schools are expected to record attendance. It is quite different to the first lockdown.

Wherever a family has one or more critical worker parents we will find a space either now or when the time is right for the family. In line with the previous section, we ask all families to consider the wider national aim here of reducing transmission and determine whether a school place for their child is absolutely necessary i.e. if one parent remains at home and conditions are that they could reasonably support home learning then it would not be absolutely necessary. If the family believes



that it is then that is good enough for us and we will find a space when the time is right for the family 😊.

2. Vulnerable Children

School leaders, rightly, are expected to encourage parents to send their child to school if they are vulnerable. We will work in positive partnership with families respecting their wishes but also sharing opportunities and benefits to encourage attendance for vulnerable children.

Similar to the critical worker guidance, if you believe your child meets the vulnerable child definition and we agree with that view, then a place will be made available. The inclusion team have reviewed information for all children in school against the government guidance to be absolutely certain that every vulnerable child in school has been identified. We have contacted all parents by email where we believe a child may benefit from a school place at this time.

If you believe your child is vulnerable and/or have had an email inviting your child, we still ask parents to complete the online form, or at least contact school office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk or 01903 204141, if that is not possible.

It is expected that the school will need to exhaust attempts to contact a family where there is a potentially a child or children that would meet the criteria for vulnerable. As such, we would ask parents to respond to the email to avoid the additional work that will come with further follow up emails, phone calls and potential home visits if we do not get a response from a family within a reasonable time frame by Monday 11th January.

3. Notification of a school place

A school place will only be agreed once the online form has been completed. In exceptional circumstance we can facilitate the form completion at the school site.

School staff will review the online forms before 11 a.m. each working day. Parents will be notified on the same day if their place has been accepted. If there is doubt whether we could or should accept the application a member of the team will call a parent to chat it through, the final decision will be communicated in writing with the reasoning.

Where an application has been accepted, a start date will be set no less than three working days after the day the online form was accepted.

4. Recording Attendance

There is new and specific guidance from government on recording attendance for all children during this period of limited community opening. This guidance is different to the previous school closure in March. The table below sets out the requirements of school and the expectations of parents to communicate with the school regarding any absence.

	School Placement	Parent Action if absent from school
For children who do not have a parent that is not a critical worker and they	No allocated school place	No action required (coded X in register – this does not affect a child's attendance rates)



themselves are not vulnerable.		
Child designated as vulnerable	There is an expectation by government that all vulnerable children continue to attend school. We support that expectation.	Any child designated as vulnerable where a parent declines the invitation to attend during this period must be registered with a 'c' other authorized circumstances i.e. they are eligible to attend but the place has been declined. Where a place has been accepted then the expectation must be that the child attends full time. If for any reason a child is not in on a specific day the parent must contact the school in the normal way to confirm the reason.
Child with a critical worker parent	Unless we are informed by the online form we do not know which families have one or more critical workers. A place will be made available, unless there are exceptional circumstances i.e. we don't have enough staff.	Where a child is eligible for a place, whether they have taken that offer or not a 'C' code will be used within the register. Where a place has been accepted then the expectation must be that the child attends full time. If for any reason a child is not in on a specific day the parent must contact the school in the normal way to confirm the reason.

5. Guidance for children at home

Online learning

We have rearranged the school website to ensure easier and quicker access to our online learning programme.

You will find the information in the original location and also at:

Home > Lockdown Learning

<https://www.chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk/page/?title=Lockdown+Learning&pid=1230>

Staff are working incredibly hard to maintain a very high standard of home learning and ensure it is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all families at home.

Free School Meals

If your child is eligible for free schools meals they are entitled to a FREE food parcel, each week during this period of lock down. If you would like to take advantage of this please email office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk or call if you don't have access to email 01903 204141

Food vouchers will be sent to every family eligible for free school meals for the half term holiday. More information about this will follow.



Data Costs

School has signed up to packages from mobile providers regarding support for families with data costs. If your child is learning from home and you are interested in finding out more about this please email our IT manager Ben Miller bmiller@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk for more information.

Reading

Please find below a link to the online reading resources for each year group.
<https://www.chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk/page/?title=Reading+Support+at+Home&pid=336&action=saved>

It contains a detailed guide with a range of audio books, author clips and discussions and early reading/phonics resources. Over the coming weeks we will be looking to add further to these resources but there is a good range available now.

The book lists are organised for each year groups with links to online e-books which are also linked to the AR level of children in each year group.

We are not encouraging children, currently at home, to attend school to borrow books from the school library. However, where this is felt necessary, we will facilitate it. Please email the year leader who will organise a pack of books to be prepared for collection, wherever it is necessary.

6. Guidance for children attending during the limited community opening

COVID Safe

Consistent with all previous guidance a child **MUST NOT** attend school if they or a member of their household has any of the three symptoms.

Parents are allowed on site only for collection of year 3 and 4 children. All parents and visitors must wear masks or entry will be refused.

Parents and visitors are not permitted to enter any part of the school building unless they have a prior appointment. Please email office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk or phone 01903 204141.

Registration

All children attending during this limited community opening period will register in the school halls. Year 3 and 4 register in the sports hall. Year 5 and 6 register in the new hall. They must go straight to the appropriate hall before going anywhere else in the school premises.

School Meals

All children eligible for limited community opening are also eligible for a free school meal, regardless of whether they normally have free school meal eligibility or whether they pay for meals. The free meals will start from Monday 18th January – **however we MUST have written notification by Monday 11th if families would like that option.** If we receive a request after Monday 11th we will advise you when the meals will be available for your child. As we order in advance, there is always a minimum of a week's delay before meals will be available.

Please email the school office team, office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk to confirm that you would like your child to have a school meal provided by Chartwells. If you would like that please also confirm whether your child has any allergies within the same email. We will assume there are no



allergies if the email does not contain information about a child's allergies and we have no record on our system.

If a school meal is not required, then children should be provided with a packed lunch. Typically, packed lunches will be eaten in class and school meals in the hall – this will remain open to review to be COVID safe.

7. Other Important Information

Assessment Reports

We had hoped to finalise and communicate autumn term school reports this week, however events have overtaken that a little bit. We are confident they will be completed and communicated by Friday 15th January. Please accept our apologies for the delay in processing this important information for families.

Parents Evening

Parents' Evenings planned for week commencing 18th January will go ahead. Class teachers will contact parents by phone at the time slots that have been booked. A booking is only successful once you have received a confirmation email. Parents must be ready to receive the call at the allotted time. We will only call one parent – this will typically be the parent designated as priority 1. It is important that only one booking is made per child. Appointments will be strictly limited to 8 mins to ensure teachers can keep to the schedule.

Social Media Questions

We love the affirmation comments and thumbs up for the posts on Facebook – thank you for entering so many positive comments it really has given the team a massive boost when they most need it – keep them coming 😊

If you have a question or concern in relation to any element of school life please avoid posting on face book or social media until the Chesswood team has had an opportunity to clarify and confirm an answer – contact us directly. We don't routinely monitor Facebook for questions being asked; they sometime get buried and sometimes they can cause worry and anxiety for other families setting off a chain reaction. If you have a question, query or concern please use the most appropriate email below – this will we can address your needs quickly, efficiently and effectively:

Question, query or concern	Contact
General	office@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Wrap Around Care	kbrown@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Special Educational Needs	sen@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Child Protection and welfare	cplo@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
IT and Computing	bmiller@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Concerns	concern@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Complaints	complaint@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
Academic e.g. learning related	Year 3 Leader ngilbert@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk



	Year 4 Leader zmonger@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
	Year 5 Leader thicks@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk
	Year 6 Leader jpeace@chesswood.w-sussex.sch.uk

Wrap Around care

We are in the process of crediting parent account for wrap around care wherever that cannot be used at the present time. Parents do not need to take any action.

Year 6 Bristol School Visit

We are still working on the basis that the Year 6 Bristol residential visit will go ahead. If there is any change to that we advise parents.

Year 6 SATs

The education secretary has confirmed that the statutory assessments have been cancelled for Year 6 children this year. We agree with that decision. However, contrary to popular belief, SATs are a positive and important part of school assessment and information available to the school and transition information available for secondary schools. They also act as a rite of passage for children, amongst other end of primary school events.

We expect schools to be fully open by May and Year 6 children will undertake internal Year 6 SATs, under test conditions. The outcomes of those test will then be used by school to support the transition process and they will be reported to parents. We can then use that information to better understand the impact of the past year on each child's learning and outcomes.

Finally, apologies for such a long letter, we have tried to answer all questions we have been asked by families and anticipate other questions that will naturally arise in the coming weeks. I wish all families a lovely weekend after a monumental week!

Yours sincerely,