**Birches Primary School**

**20th March 2020**

**Ref: Supporting Children of Key Workers in Primary School**

Dear Parents / Carers,

First of all, I would like to assure you that the Staff and Governors remain committed to our children and community. We hope that everyone is taking precautions to remain safe and well.

Yesterday the Minister for Education in Northern Ireland, Peter Weir MLA, made a statement outlining how schools will close from the end of the school day on Friday 20th March, opening with skeleton staff on Monday 23rd March to support identified Key Workers. This morning he stated:

‘*For a lot of key workers they will have somebody at home, they will have the opportunity to maybe have a family member to look after them*.’

We are still waiting for further information, but at the moment I will be collating a list of all families who are classed as Key Workers.

The supplied list of key workers is very broad and it is essential that the number of children potentially attending are kept to an absolute minimum to reduce the spread of infection to other pupils and staff. The list of Key Workers is available at the end of this letter.

When requesting that your child be considered, please read the following information carefully:

Only ask for your child to be considered if it is absolutely essential e.g.

- Are both parents key workers? Advice given is that:

‘Only children with BOTH parents working as Key Workers and only when both parents are working AT THE SAME TIME should their children attend school.’

* What are the shift patterns of both parents?
* In single parent families, the main carer **MUST** be a Key Worker and be required at work.
* Is your work critical to the COVID19 response?
* Do you work in one of the critical sectors?
* Have you any other alternative to keeping your child safe?

Numbers must be strictly limited for the welfare of staff and pupils attending, remembering we have all been told to not have any unnecessary social contact.

This provision will be dependent on the availability of staff who may themselves become ill or have to self-isolate within their household. A risk assessment will be carried out at the end of each day. If we are unable to open school, you will be informed as soon as possible.

Please be aware that we will not be able to operate a ‘normal’ school day and your child will not receive formal teaching. They can bring their Home Learning Pack which they can continue with in school.

Children are not to bring in a mobile phone or any other electronic device.

**If you are sending your child to school please make sure:**

* They do not have a new prolonged cough or a high temperature. If your child shows any symptoms throughout the course of the day, you will be contacted to have them brought home. A room will be made available for them to self-isolate until they are collected.
* If anyone has contact with your child presenting with any of these symptoms, they have to self-isolate for 14 days.

**Important Information**

* Our school’s normal opening and closing time will apply.
* There will be no medical support available in school.
* Children attending will be required to wear their school uniform.
* This will not be a normal school day. It is intended to ensure ‘safe supervision’ rather than teaching.
* At the moment it is unclear if there will be a school meal, so all children will require a packed lunch and break.
* Provision of any level of service will be dependent on staff availability and the school may have to be closed if this becomes a problem.
* I have attached the current list of key workers.

Please be assured of my commitment to work in the best interests of pupils and staff.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Patricia Watson

**Questions for Key worker parents:**

* Have you read carefully all of the information above?
* Are you a key worker?
* What category of key worker?
* Have you already withdrawn your child for H&S reasons?
* Is your family socially isolating?
* Is any member of your family exhibiting any symptoms of cough or temperature?
* Does your child have underlying health issues?
* Do you have family members at home with underlying health issues?
* Are you clear that children exhibiting symptoms must be picked up immediately?
* Are you clear that that Children will be socially distanced in school?

**Here is a list of key workers as stated by the Education Minister**:

 ‘’Key workers are those who are maintaining essential public services during the Covid-19 response.  The definition of key worker will be flexible and dependant on the circumstance and requirements over the course of this critical period.  There will be flexibility shown on the definition of key workers to ensure all those who need support receive it. The list is not prescriptive.  However, to give some guidance the following outlines the broad categories of what would be defined as a key worker;

**•           Health and Social Care**. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector

•           **Education and childcare**. This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response.

•           **Public safety and national security**.  This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles.

•           **Transport**. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response.

 **Utilities and Communication**.  This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal.

**•           Food and other necessary goods.**  This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g hygiene, medical etc).

•           **Other workers essential to delivering key public services**

•           **Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response**

If you are an identified key worker, please e-mail Mrs Watson the following information at pwatson676@c2kni.net. I would like to thank the families who have already sent me this information.

* Name of child / children in the family
* Area of Key work