



# DELVES LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Delves Lane, Consett, Co Durham, DH8 7ES

Head Teacher: Mrs R A Woods

Tel: 01207 503984 Fax: 01207 588880 [delveslaneprimary@durhamlearning.net](mailto:delveslaneprimary@durhamlearning.net)

## LEARN, ACHIEVE, INSPIRE

12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

With the first week of Spring Term over, we are glad to have been able to settle relatively smoothly into a new routine, offering in-school provision for our vulnerable children and those from our critical worker families, whilst providing a good quality remote education to all our pupils at home. We have been able to reach this point thanks to the tireless efforts of staff in preparing and improving our systems whilst adapting to ever-changing circumstances.

What is clear from this week however, is that the number of pupils eligible to attend school under the critical worker provision is much higher than during the first lockdown. In light of recent Coronavirus developments, we need to ensure that we can accommodate those **most in need**, whilst recognising that we must continue to do everything that we can to keep staff and pupils as safe as possible in school.

**The extremely rapid rate of transmission of the virus at the moment means that we must do everything we can to protect our school community: pupils, parents and staff alike.**

As I am sure you will understand, running a dual system of educating and supervising children in school, whilst providing remote learning to those children at home, places an additional logistical staffing burden on the school. Teachers are deployed to online teaching, whilst staff are still required in the classrooms for those being educated in school.

The guidance from the Department for Education was updated on Friday evening and reiterates that whilst children with parents or carers who are a critical worker can go to school if required, parents and carers who are critical workers **"should keep their children at home if they can"**.

For our part, we must stress that places in school for critical worker children are limited and we ask that you only take up a place if absolutely necessary. Schools are being instructed to keep children in small consistent bubbles with a very limited number of children in each group. We have received a high demand of applications from critical workers, and are getting more requests on a daily basis. We must ensure that this provision is at the correct scale to protect both our staff and children who attend. If the provision is too large it negates any benefits of social distancing measures the government imposed and through associated contacts, children and staff will be exposed to an unacceptable risk. The number of requests for school places is at least six times higher than those made in the Spring (first lockdown). This simply cannot be safely sustained.

This is not 'business as usual'. All medical advisors are clear that the safest place for children and families to be at present **is at home with as little social contact as possible**.

These emergency places are intended for families who have no other adult at home and who work in a job that is **critical** to the response to this virus.

As a community we must ensure that there is space for our healthcare workers' children and other vital roles that are actively helping to fight the pandemic. Many of our critical workers, particularly hospital and frontline medical staff, will be working additional hours and covering multiple shifts and we want to ensure that we prioritise those with the most urgent need.

Those families who have had a place over the last week or so, may find that moving forward, places may not be available as government guidance has been updated to reflect who is a Critical Worker.



At Delves Lane Primary, we pride ourselves on working with our community and doing our best to accommodate our families, as much as possible. However, we are in the middle of a pandemic and our priority has to be the safety of all children and staff in school.

We are now asking you to review your needs and consider only sending your child to school if it is absolutely necessary in order to carry out your critical worker role. We will need to ask parents/carers to provide individual evidence of their critical worker status using the published guidance. We may also ask for evidence of shifts worked, to ensure we provide school for those in most need. Thank you to those parents who have already provided this evidence. We will be in contact with families, where evidence is required.

Parents should discuss any continuing difficulties with their own employer's HR department.

Please take some time if you can to review your own situation and consider where you can reduce your need. We ask that where children need to attend school, they only do this where there is no alternative childcare available.

I am not asking this lightly. I am acutely aware of how hard it is to home educate children whilst holding down a full-time job. However, I am also concerned about the rising rates of COVID in the North East, increasing the likelihood that we will see more cases of the virus in our school. If this happens, we will have to close bubbles which will cause childcare problems for those workers that are absolutely critical to saving lives. The fewer children in school, the less chance of spread and transmission.

We will be sending out a weekly survey to parents and carers today, along with this letter. All requests will be considered, and we will have to prioritise our Critical Workers, based on the government list <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Please provide any updates on the survey as soon as possible to enable us to plan for the week ahead.

Thank you in advance for your help and support with this matter. Take care and stay safe.

***B Woods***

Mrs R Woods  
Head Teacher