



Dear parents and carers

9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

It has been one of the most challenging few weeks of my 17 years working in education. It has meant that many difficult and extra-ordinary decisions have had to be made in an intense, sustained, and pressurised timeframe.

My priority has always been, and will always be, to safeguard the health and safety of the children and adults in my care. With so much new guidance from both the Department for Education (DFE) and from Public Health England (PHE), it has not always been easy to understand how they reflect the population at Severndale, as views can be opposing/ contradictory/ not relevant. Over the last few weeks there has been a lot of anxiety and fear brought about through the media and from public announcements from central government, particularly around the need for social distancing for adults and children who are deemed medically vulnerable (following guidance from PHE). Understanding how this new and totally unprecedented situation impacts on how we are to safely manage pupil needs has been, and continues to be, a very steep learning curve.

### **Risk assessing essential childcare**

The shape of how Severndale's offer has looked over the last 2 weeks, how it currently looks, and how it will look during this period, is ever changing as we gain new/updated information and support from national and local government. We are currently in discussion with Shropshire Public Health and Shropshire Health and Safety departments regarding the sourcing of correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enable the safe management of how staff may work with children who require any physical support, with regards to the risks of spreading Coronavirus, when staff and pupils cannot follow social distancing guidance if essential childcare is required. These precautions are being sought in the best interests of our children, the families within their households, staff, the families within their households, and also anyone in between who is at risk of spreading the virus, e.g. taxi's/ schools transport escorts and drivers, to also the people in their households, etc.

I understand that the Shropshire SEND team, social care, and a number of our families are desperate for us to resume 'normal' practice amongst this national crisis. I can honestly say, we want this too. However, it is our responsibility to our Severndale community to do this safely so that we do not put people at increased risk. We fully understand the wider implications of the Coronavirus spreading amongst our Severndale community, which is the reason for our steady and considered decision making. Maintaining the trust and confidence that staff and parents/carers have is important to us. We are dedicated to making the lives of children and young people better, and keeping them safe is at the core of this ethos.

### **Continued offer of support**

We understand the impact of Severndale's closure on our families which is why we have put in place such a comprehensive amount of contact for distance learning and support, which in comparison to other schools, is second to none. Thank you for the positive feedback regarding this, we're glad this is making such a difference to your lives in this current situation. We have also opened up childcare arrangements for as many as we could confidently manage through a risk assessment based on social distancing, which was the only mechanism of safety against the spread of Coronavirus available at the time. Alternative options have been explored to work



around this using personal assistants and parents/carers as support for any physical needs and half day solutions where possible in order to minimise the risks of spread to multi-households. These alternatives have been positively received when taken up.

### **Further measures of protection - PPE, alternative safety precautions to social distancing**

Following the latest Public Health and NHS advice, other options are now being made available to our staff in the form of additional PPE. This is aligned to the advice given to the Severndale NHS nursing team who have been instructed by the NHS to wear full PPE; including scrubs, mouth mask and/or goggles/ face shield in some circumstances. Staff will be provided with appropriate training for when to wear it, and how to dispose of it. This will support staff in how they are able to protect themselves and the children they are closely working with if they are asked to undertake duties that require them to break social distancing safety guidance.

As soon as PPE is sourced and available to staff we will be able to alter our risk assessment of how we manage the risks of spreading Coronavirus when working closely with children who need physical support. In the meantime, we are grateful for your understanding and patience while we adapt and change our approach. We will review all previous requests for childcare to reflect any changes.

### **Our Easter holiday offer**

Over the Easter holiday weeks, we have been able to work around essential health and safety maintenance/ testing for fire safety, gas and electrics, and continue to provide essential childcare and distance learning/ support to most class groups. I am sure that you will join me in thanking staff who have volunteered to give their positivity and dedication in supporting your children, in their holiday time. Also, to give you that extra push into the spirit of Easter, please visit our new YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXI66FyKfO5DJhbk2FzyiRw> There are lots of inspired activities and ideas, filmed by our amazing staff, especially made for our Severndale community to enjoy. Let us know what you think!

Please continue to stay safe at home. Let us know if you think there is anything else/different that we can do to further improve our offer of support.

This will be a very different Easter, but we hope that it is as good as can be!

Best wishes

**Sabrina Hobbs**  
**Principal**