



Dear parents and carers

13<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **RE: POTENTIAL REOPENING OF SCHOOLS**

I hope that you are all safe and well. This has been a difficult time for all of us, and I am sure that for the majority of you, the extended closure of schools, social services support and non-emergency medical care, due to COVID-19 has not been easy.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday, you probably have many questions regarding the potential reopening of schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Although there are still many unknown details, I wanted to reassure you of our intentions.

**Currently, we do not anticipate a change to the off-site or on-site provisions that we currently have in place and children will not be expected back in school on the 1st June. We are working with families to support everyone in the best way possible and reviewing each on a case-by-case basis.**

To help explain the situation, I have identified important points below about the position at Severndale, in order to help you make informed decisions for your family.

### **1 - What we know**

- The risk of transmission and contracting COVID-19 remains high
- The number of deaths and confirmed cases remains high
- The need for clinically vulnerable people to stay at home remains
- The need for everyone to socially distance remains the case
- Social restrictions to see your friends and family remains in place
- Every child with an EHCP is classified as 'vulnerable' and therefore is eligible for school childcare provision during school closures - this has been the case since lockdown and is unchanged.

Therefore all Severndale pupils are entitled a place for childcare should they need it. We have not turned anyone away, regardless of year group.

### **2 - Special School Guidance**

The government has said certain school years should return to school first on 1st June (R1, Y1, Y6). However, there is Special School Guidance, which means that in our setting, there is no relevance to the Year groups that have been identified.

### **Changes to government guidance that may affect us**

#### **3 - Pressure for parents to return to work:**

- **Extremely Clinically Vulnerable** - If you are concerned that your child or anyone in your household is classified as extremely clinically vulnerable, you should have/ ask for a shielding letter from your GP/ consultant to share with your employer to enable you to stay at home to shield that person from contracting COVID-19.
- **Clinically Vulnerable** – If you are concerned that your child is classified as clinically vulnerable, you should seek medical advice. You should ask if they are eligible for a 'vulnerability' letter that you can share with your employer to enable you to stay at home to effectively 'shield' your child from COVID-19.

Please see the attached sheet that identifies government guidance and relevant criteria.

#### 4 - Pressure for parents to send children to school

- **Staying at home advice** – ‘It is still very important that people stay home unless necessary to go out for specific reasons set out in law’ – The general rule remains; it is safest to be at home where possible.
- **School provision for priority groups (all pupils eligible)** – ‘vulnerable children of all year groups continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so.’ This advice has not changed, however, there is a strong assumption that ALL children with an EHCP are ‘vulnerable’ and safer at school than to stay at home. We know that this is not true and feel that this is not necessarily aimed at those with a learning difficulty (see attached article hosted by Special Needs Jungle).
- **You decide - You will NOT be fined or reprimanded for making the informed decision to keep your child at home due to the risks of COVID-19**

#### 5 - Information to help you decide about on-site provision

- a) On-site safety precautions** (not limited to, includes):
  - Staff support elevated levels of hygiene and cleaning of all environments
  - Staff wear appropriate PPE when undertaking prolonged and sustained close contact work/ duties with children where needed.
  - There are restrictions to the number of staff/ pupils in any area (e.g. maximum of 5 people in a classroom)
- b) Educational/ social/ behavioural routines:**
  - Education is provided by teachers via Zoom and other distance learning activities. This may be accessed by pupils on-site and supported by Teaching Assistants(TAs). TAs will continue to support the practise of known communication and behaviour management strategies.
  - To manage social distancing between children, we restrict the number of pupils in a classroom. Due to the varying age groups and levels of need/ cognitive ability of our pupils attending on-site provision, many pupils are working 1:1/ 2:1/ 2:2 with minimal contact with classmates.
  - None of the usual routines of a school day are able to be implemented or followed.
  - There is minimal demands put upon pupils in order to manage levels of anxiety and mitigate the risks for the need for physical interventions/ aggressive outbursts.
  - Specialist support teams are not available/ functioning as per usual set up (e.g. behaviour support, pastoral support, SALT, manual handling, forest school, swimming, rebound)
  - Consistency/ familiarity of groupings/staff cannot be guaranteed.
  - Staff work dynamically dependant on the needs of the pupils on-site. Timings and activities are managed with a flexible approach.
- c) Limiting factors:**
  - Number of staff available – including key staff such as site staff, safeguarding, leadership, and cleaning staff
  - Number of classrooms
  - Children of key workers – We continue to prioritise the childcare needs of this group
  - Capacity - We are currently at capacity at just over 50 pupils over the course of a week. Any increase of pupil numbers will affect the number of days pupils can attend as

they will need to share the limited provision with more children. This is carried out on a case-by-case basis

- Transport – This remains the responsibility of the Local Authority/ parents/ carers. Please be 'alert' to social distancing and cleaning arrangements on schools transport. Availability of usual transport arrangements may be limited.

## **6 – Comprehensive off-site provision**

- a) Zoom class sessions/ calls** – Thank you for the many positive comments and feedback. Children, parents/ carers and staff have all described how this is the highlight of their days and how well it has supported networking, socialising, learning and wellbeing. Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to keeping these important lines of communication open.

Comments have included; "I have never felt closer to the school community, than I do now", "I have received so much daily support and advice, it's been a lifeline", "my son wakes up and gets ready to see his friends every day. He loves it!"

- b) Severndale YouTube Channel** (link attached) – With a growing number of subscribers now over 200, and over 50 videos created by our talented staff especially for our pupils, this is a new and successful venture. Please do ask if you need help with any suitable selections or if you have any suggestions or ideas for future videos that your child would enjoy.
- c) Oak National Academy, specialist lessons** (link attached) – Many of our teachers have been volunteering their time and expertise to this virtual school for other children, parents and teachers to benefit from. This is one of the first comprehensive resources for children and young people with complex learning difficulties that I have ever seen. We are very proud to be identified and asked to contribute, and we are proud of our staff for collaborating and supporting each other to produce such high quality results. Let us know what you think.
- d) New ideas to support you at home** – We understand the changes that you are facing and your decision to keep your child at home in order to keep them safe. In effort to further support you, we will be offering workshops and parent forums through additional Zoom sessions. Look out for information regarding this.

## **What's next?**

We will continue with the current offsite and onsite provision and work through individual discussions with families.

You will be aware that the government have released a recovery plan, detailing key aspects of the anticipated relaxing on restrictions (link attached for your information).

Further updates of our plans to alter or change our provision may come from reading this detail and/or from any subsequent announcements and information released in the coming weeks. I cannot forecast what this might be, but I can give you the reassurance that we will continue to prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone in our Severndale community no matter what changes occur.

Please contact any staff member, or email me ([Sabrina.hobbs@severndaleschool.co.uk](mailto:Sabrina.hobbs@severndaleschool.co.uk)), if you have any comments or queries regarding any aspect of this.

Thank you for your continued support and positivity throughout. It is very much appreciated and makes a big difference.

Best regards



Sabrina Hobbs

### **Useful links and relevant government guidance – May 2020 Update**

#### **Clinically vulnerable:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

#### **Clinically vulnerable people**

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions, treatments like chemotherapy, or medicines such as steroid tablets
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- pregnant women

#### **Extremely clinically vulnerable:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-on-protecting-people-most-likely-to-get-unwell-from-coronavirus-shielding-young-peoples-version>

#### **Government recovery plan:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/884171/FINAL\\_6.6637\\_CO\\_HMG\\_C19\\_Recovery\\_FINAL\\_110520\\_v2\\_WEB\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884171/FINAL_6.6637_CO_HMG_C19_Recovery_FINAL_110520_v2_WEB_1_.pdf)

**Special Needs Jungle** – provides parent-centred information, news, special needs resources and informed opinion about SEND

<https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/it-is-a-mistake-to-assume-all-vulnerable-children-are-at-risk-of-harm/>

**Severndale YouTube Channel** – Videos made by our staff, especially for our Severndale community of pupils and their families

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXI66FyKfO5DJhbk2FzyiRw>

**Oak National Academy** - Online lessons for pupils with complex needs. Many of our teachers have volunteered their time and expertise in support of helping children, families and staff nationally.

<https://www.thenational.academy/online-classroom/specialist/#subjects>