



Dear Parents and Carers,

Obviously, I did not expect to be closing the school before my first term as Headteacher at St. Matthew's was up, so it is with heavy heart that I write this letter. Today will be the last day that we will be open until further notice.

If you have been offered a place for your child at the reduced provision that we will be providing next week, then you will receive notification of that place today. If you do not receive an offer of a place, then you **must not attend** school on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Anyone that is not in receipt of an offer will be refused access to the site.

I want to reiterate the government's advice that anyone who can stay at home must stay at home. The whole country is in a battle to limit the spread of Coronavirus. Everyone must do their bit. If there is someone at home who can look after the children, that is where they must stay. We are limiting the numbers on site in response to advice from government and health professionals so that we can ensure that safe social distancing can be applied. My first priority will be the health and safety of staff and pupils. This may mean that you have been made a partial offer of reduced provision.

We are endeavouring to assist those in key worker categories as best we can, but the same message applies: if there is someone that can look after the children in the family home, that is the safest place for the children to be and we advise that all children that can stay at home do so. Children attending St. Matthew's as of Monday should only be those that **absolutely need it**. I do not want to put at risk my staff, the pupils that have to attend and all associated family members.

For your family's safety and that of the wider community, your child should only attend school if there is no other safe option. This is likely to be the case if both parents are in the critical group, e.g. two police officers. If you have applied for a place at the reduced provision next week but no longer require to be on the school's list, then please contact the school office.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, you will be offered a place at the reduced provision that we put in place as of next week. Similarly, if your family is involved with a social worker, you will be offered a place at the provision. In most cases, this will be partial provision so that we can manage the numbers on site safely, whilst maintaining contact with those pupils.

We are currently finalising plans to cater for pupils in receipt of free school meals as of next week. This only applies to children that are identified as being eligible for free school meals through the benefits system or another channel. We will send out further

communication on this to relevant parents once we have firm plans in place through our supplier.

In regard to children who are not going to be on site, we will miss them greatly during the closure. Hopefully, it will only be for a short period. Some parents have contacted school to say that they are worried that the children at home will be falling behind their peers in school, but that will not be the case. The children in school will not be accessing our usual provision. We have already begun to provide home learning packs and materials on the website to enable them to continue learning at home. My advice is to try to provide some structure to your days: set a timetable and follow it. While it is not ideal for children to miss so much school, this could be a great opportunity for families to learn together. As time goes on, we will refine our home learning offer. We will also try to facilitate some access to the school to pick up additional resources, circumstances permitting.

In these uncertain and unprecedented times, it is vital that we work together for the good of our whole community. The overall priority at the moment is that we limit the spread of Covid-19 and we all must take appropriate steps to do that as and when we can. We appreciate the support of all of the families that have shown patience and understanding with us over the last week or so. We look forward to the future when we can welcome everyone back to St. Matthew's.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Murphy', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Murphy