



20/03/2020

Dear Parents

On behalf of all of the staff of St Therese of Lisieux Primary School, I want to thank you all for your support over the past two weeks. We have been trying to find a way through a very fast changing and challenging situation with very little clear direction from the various agencies that support schools. Your kind words and messages have encouraged and heartened us in our efforts.

The teachers have been learning new methods of communicating with their classes and working out how to ensure all classes are supported in the event of their teacher becoming unwell. Teachers will be using Class Dojo and/or Google Classroom. We have one exceptional closure left this academic year and we will be taking this on Monday 23rd March so that teachers can trial these methods individually while working from their own homes. Children will need individual log in codes and passwords and when these are all organised we will ask you to pick them up from school, possibly on Mon March 30th. I will let you know by text message once this has been confirmed.

Minister Weir's statement last night says, the "aim of closing schools to pupils was taken to reduce the number of children in schools to enhance the effectiveness of our response to the Covid-19 outbreak." However, he has asked schools to assist key workers who are maintaining essential public services, and **who have exhausted all other options for childcare.**

The minister has also asked that we keep the number of pupils in school to a minimum. The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in our communities and wider society.

Therefore, for those families where **both parents** are key workers and have no alternative option we will do our best to assist you in looking after your children. However, we already have teachers, classroom assistants and cleaners in self isolation. We will offer a child care service only while we have **safe staffing levels** to do so.

This will not be a drop in service. We need to know how many children will be in school each day to make sure we have the staff to look after them and keep them safe. Therefore, in cases where both parents are key workers, or lone parents are key workers, **and no other childcare options are available**, we will endeavour to assist with childcare, during core school hours from **Tuesday March 24th**.

The list of key workers is attached to this letter.

We must stress that the best way to keep everyone safe (children, staff and your loved ones), is to KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.

The criteria set by the Department of Education can be found here

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/letter-minister-education-education-sector>

If you believe you fall into the category of parents who meet this prescriptive criteria, please email info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk to register your interest as soon as possible.

Given the limited resources and the need to ensure the safety of all, we will need to prioritise those who are eligible.

Your email should provide the names, phone numbers, occupations and working hours of both parents. Please also provide the name, address and contact details of your employer. If both of these occupations are not clearly detailed in Minister Weir's list, please explain in detail why you believe you should be prioritised for this service. Please also explain why you are not availing of other childcare options.

Please note that a representative from DE clarified to the North Belfast Primary Principals Group this morning, that in cases where only one parent is considered a key worker your child will not be offered this service, unless other very exceptional circumstances apply.

We will assess each application in line with our capacity to deliver this service. NHS workers will be prioritised. We will contact all applicants on Monday and let you know if we can offer your child a place here from Tuesday March 24th. Places allocated will be reviewed on a **daily basis** as we have to consider the availability of a sufficient number of staff to provide a safe service.

We are most grateful to those key-workers on the front line who are helping to fight this global pandemic. Please make sure to follow the most recent government advice to slow the spread of this virus and to give our wonderful NHS workers a chance to do their great work.

- Stop all non-essential contact with others
- Do what we can to limit our social contact with others
- Work from home where we possibly can
- Avoid social venues
- Self-isolate for 14 days if we have any of the key symptoms or if any of our family have these symptoms.

The staff of St Therese will keep all of our families in our prayers during this crisis and hope that you will do the same for us.

Regards

Mrs S McTaggart

Principal

DE Guidance on Key Workers

Key workers are those who are maintaining essential public services during the Covid-19 response. 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.