

Cantrell Primary School Newsletter 20th March 2020



Dear parents and carers

It is with a heavy heart we close our doors today for most children until further notice.

A message about children's wellbeing at this confusing time:

We have prepared work packs to keep your children busy during their time off and you might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your children. You might have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing...

Our children are just as concerned and worried as we may be right now. Our children not only can hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off of school for a few weeks sounds awesome, they are probably picturing a fun time like summer break, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you will see an increase in behaviour issues with your children. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally - it will happen. You may see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behaviour in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What kids need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be ok. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and push your love on to your kids a bit more. Play outside and go on walks? Bake cookies and paint pictures? Play board games and watch movies? Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo on-line? Start a book and read together as a family? Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing for a while?

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single child is in this boat and they all will be ok! When we are back in the classroom, we will all work hard to get this back on track and meet them where they are. Teachers are experts at this! Don't get upset with your children because they don't want to do work all day or follow a schedule every day and all week.

If I can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your kids' mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during their weeks away from school is long gone. So, keep that in mind, every single day.

Stay safe and take care of each other.

Debbie Weaver

URGENT UPDATE

Dear Parents

More specific information on school attendance from Monday finally appeared from the government overnight (link below).

The advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. **If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.**

If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.

If your work is **critical** to the COVID-19 response, and you work on the frontline of one of the critical sectors listed here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>, and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision. **(Please note that proof of your employment will be required for your child to enter the school site on Monday).**

Before looking at the list of what may constitute 'keyworkers' please read these paragraphs from the government statement (also note that this is an offer to parents and **there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so**):

*"The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. **If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.** That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for **those children who absolutely need to attend.***

*It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But **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 wider society.** Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for **a limited** number of children - **children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.***

*Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. **And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.***"

I would urge you to consider this advice very seriously. Whilst we are staying open and we want to do everything to support the government's strategy to tackle COVID-19, it would defeat the whole purpose of this measure if more children than absolutely necessary were in school. Please bear in mind that we want to have the capacity to be able to cater for the children of those workers who are critical to the COVID-19 response at a time when school staffing is also depleted as staff have their own health concerns and vulnerable members in the household to consider too.

Children absolutely **MUST NOT** be in school if reasonable, safe alternative arrangements can be made. Neither should they be in because you feel they'll benefit from a continuing education. That may sound drastic, but it's the stark truth of the situation we are in: we are effectively opening as a shelter to allow key workers to do their invaluable work during this crisis. Rest assured for those who do have to send their children in, that staff will ensure that they feel safe, secure and are occupied with meaningful activities. The welfare and mental health of the children who come in is crucial at a time when their parents/carers are on the frontline of this emergency.

Stay safe and best wishes,

Debbie Weaver

Head Teacher