

Friday 20 March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

**Ref: Supporting children (Years 8-10) of key workers in Banbridge Academy**

Yesterday evening the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland, Mr Peter Weir MLA, published a letter outlining how schools will close from the end of school today. However, details have been provided in relation to how schools will open with skeleton staff on Monday 23 March to support the children of key workers.

As outlined by the Minister, supervision in schools will only be available in Post-Primary Schools for children of key workers in Years 8-10. Children who do not fall into these groups should remain at home. It is vitally important that we are aware of how many children of key workers will be attending school on Monday morning in order to ensure that appropriate supervision can be arranged in advance. With this in mind, if you are an identified key worker, please make contact with the school today, Friday 20 March, to inform us if your child will be attending. This can be via telephone or e-mail. Before contacting school, please pay particular attention to the following points. Schools will not be able to operate a 'normal' school day. Many of our schools are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and most likely staffing levels will reduce further over the coming weeks.

Points to consider:

\*A list of key workers, outlined by the Department of Education is listed below. Only children with BOTH parents working as key workers, and both parents out at work at the same time should consider attending school. In single parent families, the individual parent must be a key worker.

\*If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child to school, for example, with other family members, friends etc. Please try and use schools as a last resort in order to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance.

\*Each school's normal opening and closing time will apply e.g. 9am - 3.30pm.

\*Children attending will be required to wear their full school uniform. Please be advised that schools will be performing childcare/supervision duties only, rather than teaching, as not all teachers are currently available to teach specific year groups and teachers must be available to provide online/remote learning.

We ask that you pay attention to the points outlined above before deciding to send your son/daughter to school. As advised in the Minister's letter the aim is to keep the number of pupils coming into schools to a minimum. Likewise, we fully understand the need to support you in your vital role and if the only option is to send your child to school, we will continue to look after them.

Yours sincerely

R S McLoughlin  
Principal

Key workers are those who are maintaining essential public services during the Covid-19 response. The definition of key worker will be flexible and dependent on the circumstance and requirements over the course of this critical period. However, to give some guidance the following information 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