

March 20th 2020

Dear Parents,

As promised I am writing to finalise arrangements for the closure of the school. We will close at 3.10pm this afternoon and remain closed until further notice.

I never imagined having to write a letter like this and although I agree fully with the government's decision it is with a heavy heart that we close the school. We will miss very much our daily interactions with the young people. I have to say they have been a real credit to all of you this week and even in such difficult circumstances they have been a pleasure to teach. We will re-open the school as soon as we can and we look forward to that day.

Arrangements for the setting of work

Mr Towers has written a separate letter with full details of how we will continue to set work for students while the school is closed. A hard copy is being sent home but it will also be sent electronically and you can access it on the school website.

Key Workers

If you are a key worker and need your child to be in school then please do get in touch. We will write a separate letter to those parents detailing the plan for next week.

If you haven't already please contact: keyworker@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

I am afraid that we cannot extend this beyond the list of key workers published by the government. The full details of this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

In short the government have identified the following: health and social care, education and childcare, key public services, local and national government, food and other necessary goods, public safety and national security, transport, utilities, communications and financial services.

The DfE have today published the following guidelines:

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. 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.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- 1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.***
- 2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.*
- 3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.*
- 4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.*

KEY MESSAGE TO PARENTS

You should only send your child to school if there is no safe alternative. This is the first principle of the government's guidance. Provision in school is the last resort.

For this plan to work we need our parents to follow this guidance to the letter. We cannot be in a position where we put lives at risk unnecessarily.

I hope everyone understands this message – this is not Balcarras being awkward, we are following clear public health guidance.

Children with EHCPs

If your child has an EHCP the school should already have contacted you. If you need to contact us again then in the first instance email Mrs Young:

kly@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Contacting the school during the closure

If you need to contact the school then please email us:

admin@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk

We will get back to you as quickly as we can.

Communications during the closure

I will issue regular communications with you via the website. Please keep an eye on the news page.

Children who qualify for Free School Meals

The government are working on a scheme to issue parents with vouchers. Until this is up and running Balcarras will provide a financial contribution to you. If this applies to you we will be in touch.

Collection of medicines that the school holds

If we hold any medication for your child and you need it at home then children can collect it from Reception and take it home today. Alternatively you can come in at any point up to 4pm today to get it. Reception will also be open on Monday. If your child is going to be in school next week then it would probably be wise to leave their medication with us.

Public Examinations

We haven't yet received any updated information about how GCSEs and A levels will be accredited. Yesterday I held an assembly with both Year 11 and Year 13 to reassure them that their hard work and effort will be rewarded. As soon as I have any further information I'll be in touch.

Our Best Wishes to you all

We wish all of you well for the coming weeks and months. Take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Yours sincerely,



Headteacher