

Rowlands Gill Primary School

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20th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Closure

As advised by the Government, we will close today for the vast majority of our children due to Coronavirus. This is to aid the attempt to slow the spread of the virus and lessen the peak.

We will be partially open to children whose parents are Key Workers, as identified by the Government document released overnight, and for some vulnerable children. This offer is our way of supporting frontline staff to continue in their vital role. It is by no means an entitlement to extra schooling and has been taken up by parents only when there is no other suitable childcare available to them.

Children who are not able to attend school are not being placed at a disadvantage educationally. The Secretary of State is clear: this is an entirely different role for schools and school staff. It is primarily about child care, not education. We will be running this provision using a skeleton staff because some of our staff have already had to self-isolate due to being medically vulnerable and others will ultimately succumb to the infection themselves and then have to self-isolate.

If you are a key worker as described above and have not yet completed a 'Key Worker Form' which was sent out via eSchools and is available on the school website, then I politely request that you do this as a matter of urgency. I am sure you will appreciate how difficult it is to organise this at such short notice and to ensure that we are supporting requests for places fairly. I will be continuing to work on this over the weekend and will respond to each request made, to clarify if we have been able to offer a place.

Should anyone find that their situation changes over the coming weeks and you need the support of the school under the terms of the Key Workers Guidance, then please contact us via the office and we will do all we can to support you. I must stress that you should not arrive at school with your child to attend our partial opening unless you have received consent from myself or Mr Boddy to do so.

All other children will need to stay at home so we ask that you do not send your child into school from Monday onwards. Government guidance states that children should not be left with elderly relatives or in groups that are vulnerable to contracting coronavirus.

Your child's learning is important to us, so we'll continue to help your child to learn. Home learning activities will continue to be provided via the school website, from Week 4 onwards. Three weeks of



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learning have already been provided in packs sent home with the children. If you still have not received your pack, please arrange to collect them from the main office (9am – 3.30pm).

Remember that you can contact your child's class teacher or a member of their team via the school email address RGPS@gateshead.gov.uk. Myself, Mrs Rowell and Mrs Elliott all have access to this email, so in the event that one of us becomes ill, there will be other people who can access the messages and direct them to the appropriate member of staff. Staff will be only too happy to help and to hear updates from the children.

For those children who are in receipt of Benefit-related Free School Meal entitlement, you will have received an email or letter via eSchools to establish how we, as a school, will continue to meet this entitlement during the school closure. Please note, the Benefit-related entitlement is different to the Universal Free School Meal entitlement for children in Reception and Years 1 and 2. The Universal entitlement is not being offered.

Some of the children who are in school today have made a rainbow. The idea is that they will hang them in a window at home so that when they may have the opportunity to head out for a walk or to get some fresh air, they can go rainbow spotting. This has been used as a way to try to help them to understand why it's not appropriate to play out with their friends in the coming weeks. We have also tried to explain about the school closure and why it is necessary.

Please continue to check the school website and eSchools as this our main form of communication from now on. Sophie Dias is kindly adding updates to the FORGPS Facebook page and if you have parents What's App groups, please feel free to prompt each other if you receive alerts or information. When we are able to re-open we will alert you via these means.

I am writing this letter today with a very heavy heart. Our new team feels like we were making a difference to our school, getting to know parents and the community and making huge progress with changes we were making to the curriculum and we've suddenly been halted. We are in uncertain times but we will get through this.

I want to thank you all for your support, particularly during this week when things have been extremely difficult for everyone. I am also incredibly touched by the kind comments you have been making about our school and staff on various platforms and personally through emails.

Whatever the future holds, our aim remains the same - to provide the best education for our children and the best support for our community. I wish I could give you a date when normality will return and all of our children can return to school. You know I can't. I want to wish you and your families all the very best. Look after yourselves, your loved ones, follow the Government guidance and stay safe.

We send all our love from the whole team here at Rowlands Gill Primary School.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "L. Clarke".

Mrs L. Clarke and the team at RGPS

