20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

**School Opening for Children of Critical Workers and Vulnerable Children**

From 3.15pm today, St Nicholas Catholic High School will be closed to most students for the foreseeable future as part of the Government’s Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Strategy.  In line with Government recommendations, the school will remain open only for the children of ‘Critical Workers’ and ‘vulnerable children’. We will be continuing to provide a level of care for those children from 9am Monday 23rd March.

**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.**

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.

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.

 It is important to remember the school itself has not decided who should be considered a ‘Critical Worker’ and the following principles will be applied by all schools:

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 on childcare from 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.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible. Only children of Critical Workers (those considered critical to the country’s response to the coronavirus pandemic) and vulnerable students will attend schools for the foreseeable future.

The [Department for Education has published a list of “Critical Workers”](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision) whose children will be prioritised for schooling during general closures because of coronavirus. The full list of Critical Workers is available via the following webpage:

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

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed and you cannot keep your child safe at home, then your children will be prioritised for education provision.

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including Child In Need plans, on Child Protection plans, ‘looked after’ children, young carers, disabled children and those with Education, Health and Care Plans.  These will be identified by the school.

We believe there will be a limited number of children who will remain eligible to attend school from 23rd March onwards and we are currently putting in place facilities for those students.

To help us identify the number of students who may need to attend school who have both or one parent/carer identified as a key worker and you wish to apply for a place within our limited provision, please can you complete the survey by **Saturday 21st March at 12 noon at the very latest.**

To access the survey please use the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=TQCEKBxgKE67QeEw___TRIHkjCfEh4dFnx5P6NOtxBZUMTREN0dJS1Y2UzNEWDBGNFlIU1VYQ0lYMiQlQCN0PWcu>

**Provision**

The provision will initially operate between the hours of 9:00 – 3:00 and will be staffed by St Nicholas Catholic High School support and teaching staff. If there are any instances of poor behaviour we will unfortunately have to withdraw the offer of provision. More details about the provision will be sent upon you being offered a place.

**Transport**

Details of bus transport provision have not yet been clarified by the Local Authority and I will update you as soon as possible.

**Queries**

If you have any questions regarding this please contact the following e-mail address: schoolclosure@st-nicholas.cheshire.sch.uk

**Next Steps**

We will email those families who have secured this provision by 5pm on Sunday 22nd March.

Yours sincerely



**Richard Woods**
Headteacher