



Watergate School
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Dear Parents, Carers and Families

I trust that you have all been able to have as restful and safe a Christmas as possible. I am writing to give you as much information as I have at the moment with regard to the school re-opening. Please be aware that this is a rapidly changing situation and we are making the best possible plans we can, given very challenging circumstances

As you will know, new guidance is being continually issued from the Department for Education (DfE) and, as such, I need to update you regarding the following points. Last night the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, announced that all primary schools in London would now remain closed until 18th January due to the high rates of coronavirus infection. This ruling does not apply to special schools, but it may affect your thinking on whether or not you wish your child to return to school at this point and it does bring about some changes that are relevant for your children, which I will try to explain in the bullet points below.

Additionally, I need to bring to your attention that it is extremely unlikely that the school will be able to safely reopen for all pupils next week and we will need to prioritise places for children of critical workers and those deemed to be more vulnerable if they stayed at home, than if they came to school.

.1. The Contingency Framework for Education and Childcare Settings

On 30 December 2020 the government announced that in order to help contain the community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), some restrictions to primary education settings are required in certain areas. These are in line with the contingency framework for education and childcare settings.

The link to this guidance is below: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-contingency-framework-for-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings-excluding-universities>



2. Attendance for pupils

When reading the information below please note I can confirm that we are in an area where this 'contingency framework' is currently being implemented.

The guidance states that:

"Where the contingency framework is implemented, special school pupils who are of primary school age should continue to attend school while full-time attendance is mandatory in mainstream primary schools. However, in the very unlikely event that evidence supports limiting attendance in primary schools, attendance is encouraged but will **not be mandatory for special school pupils of primary school age and parents will not be penalised if their child does not attend."**

This means that there will be no penalties if you decide that your child is safer at home than at school at the current time.

3. Children who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4 areas, and so all children and young people still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school.

Those whose children remain under the care of a specialist health professional may wish to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - more advice is available from the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#).

4. Staffing in school

We are currently reviewing our risk assessments, keeping in mind that we require a high number of staff in each class to safely and effectively educate and care for our pupils. The current situation affects our staff in a number of ways: some are shielding because they are clinically extremely vulnerable; some are unwell; some are having to self-isolate and others are unable to attend work because they have no childcare for their children whilst schools are shut.

The projected reduced numbers of staff will have a significant impact upon how and when the school is able to re-open. I again need to bring to your attention the fact that it is highly unlikely that the school will be open for all children next week.



5. Return to school for pupils

We will send this letter to you by email with an accompanying text that will give you a link to a survey to identify your needs and preferences with regard to your child attending school next week. We will also try to contact each of you to discuss the situation as soon as we can.

The link/QR Code to access the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XJWB57L>



As already planned 4th January 2021, is a staff training day. During this day staff will be completing planned training and preparation activities and the leadership team, will be:

- Reviewing our projected pupil numbers and staffing levels in order to be clear on what our educational offer to pupils can be in the coming few days.
- Re-considering and refining our working practices now we are in Tier 4 and have been placed in the Government's Contingency Framework
- Organising and providing Lateral Flow testing to those staff who opt to have it.

In liaison with our Governors and the Local Authority, we will then be able to communicate more clearly to you which pupils the school will be able to open to

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding in these difficult times. We look forward to seeing your son / daughter as soon as possible.

May I wish you all the best for a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Veitch
Headteacher

