



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Armstrong

Diocese of Plymouth

11th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am sure that you will have heard on the news that many schools are experiencing a big increase in request for critical worker places for their child/children in school. This has been the case at St. Mary's with over 137 places (over 35%) being applied for compared to a maximum number in the first lockdown of 75. This increased number puts those in school, staff and children alike, at a greater risk of passing on and catching the virus.

As you will be aware BCP and Oakdale West ward in particular (where our school is located) has comparable transmission rates for Covid to areas of London, with a rolling rate of 960 cases per 100,000, placing it in the highest possible transmission band. (source: Coronavirus.data.gov.Uk)



We have two sets of education and support in place: in-school education for the **vulnerable and critical worker children** and the other that provides the **home education**. We want to provide the very best we can for everyone. With over 35% of children in attendance we cannot ensure the effectiveness of even the most robust risk assessment.

These large numbers of children mean increased number of adults at a time when we need to help stop the spread of this terrible virus. The increased numbers mean that we will have to bring in even more adults to school making it more difficult to ensure the safety of the staff and children and also jeopardising the quality of our home education offer.

On Friday the Government changed their guidance again. The DfE stated that “**children of key workers should only attend school if their parents or carers cannot work from home.**” The Department for Education (DfE) advised parents and carers of children who are eligible for a school place that they **should keep them at home if at all possible.**


Therefore, I am asking all parents who have booked places to seriously reconsider if you need that place. I am doing this so I can provide the best solution for all. This is a precarious and potentially unsustainable position. You may be a critical worker, but is your role defined as **critical to the 'response to COVID'**? If it isn't please reconsider your request and if there is someone at home, or working at home, who can supervise your child, then please help us by keeping them home on those days.

Please email the school office if you are able to change your request for a school place.

It is essential that we help to protect our 'NHS' and by only taking the days that are essential this will really help protect everyone.

As always thank you for your understanding, especially at this extremely difficult time.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Armstrong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Armstrong
Headteacher