



# The Matthew Arnold School

Part of the Bourne Education Trust



24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

In light of the Prime Minister's address to the nation last night, I wanted to provide a further update and a plea regarding students coming into the school for the foreseeable future. To clarify, the latest directive from the Government is that for the next 3 weeks at least, people will be allowed to leave home only for the following reasons:

- shopping for necessities, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day, such as running or cycling, alone or with household members
- medical or care needs, for example to help a vulnerable person
- travelling to and from work, but only if you cannot work from home

Meeting friends, shopping for anything beyond essentials, and gathering in crowds, particularly of any more than two people, are now banned. These directives are severe and we will be doing everything to support this new approach.

To date, schools are still expecting to provide care for children of key workers and those that are vulnerable. However, our registers for this week are now closed. Please be aware that any student who is not already on the register will not be allowed to attend - if you arrive with your child and you have not already registered, you will be turned away. We have already set up classrooms with adequate social distancing and will not be able to change this easily for unplanned arrivals.

If you or your child have been isolated in the last week, or have become ill overnight, even if you have a registered place, you may not bring in your child without confirming with me first.

I am sharing again my core message which I sent out last week to help parents continue to risk assess and make all alternative provision possible before sending their child or contacting us to request future places:

*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.*

*It is important to underline that schools 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.*

Sadly, a small minority of parents and carers across the country have not heeded this advice. They continue to send their children into school when they could be cared for elsewhere. Please can I ask that you make every consideration before sending your children in? My staff have been amazing and all are willing to support the community but based on all the scientific research and government advice we are putting them and their families at risk.

Further considerations to make are:



- *Only send your child in on days when you are actually working*
- *Wherever possible keep your child at home in the care of a non-key worker parent/carer*

*We do not have the capacity to accommodate children of key workers just so that the non-key worker can carry on with their employment.*

I believe the spirit of the offer is to allow **absolute frontline staff** to continue fighting the coronavirus but I am keen to keep the group of children at school as small as possible, to maintain the health of each individual child and to try to keep my own staff well for as long as possible.

I have a duty of care to each member of my staff and I am not willing to put my own staff's health at risk (or the health of their children/family) to provide a childcare facility to allow non-frontline staff to continue to work.

I appreciate that there is a serious tone in this letter, but these are unprecedented circumstances and the burden of acting in the safest interests of everyone is a heavy one and rests on the shoulders of all of us.

Thank you for all the support we have received so far - you have made an enormous difference to our wellbeing.

Yours sincerely



Mary Gould  
Headteacher