



St Mary's Catholic First School  
Lucetta Lane, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2DD  
Tel: 01305 262258  
Fax: 01305 257101



E-mail: office@stmarysdorchester.dorset.sch.uk  
Website: www.stmarysdorchester.dorset.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Mrs Paula Fearn



20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As previously shared, schools have been directed to close today and remain closed until further notice **except for children of key workers and vulnerable children**, as part of the country's ongoing response to COVID-19 (coronavirus). I am writing to confirm that at ten past midnight today, the UK Government issued the following guidance -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

I attach a copy of this guidance for those people reading this letter via email. I have highlighted some key points below -

### GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE -

The government is asking "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, 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."

"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."

"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 (EHC) plans."

"Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below ([in the linked document](#)).



Many parents working in these sectors **may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.**"

"Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
- 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.
- Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
- 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.
- Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below ([in the linked document](#)), and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision."

Further advice and guidance for parents and carers is available here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers#critical-workers>

These are exponential times and in such times we will do **everything** we can to stand together with our community. To this end, our School will be open to families of key workers where there is **NO OTHER OPTIONS OPEN TO THEM**. St Mary's doors will open at 8.40 am with a start time of 8.50 am and a 3.15 pm close.

**If you are a key worker and planning to use our provision, please contact the school **URGENTLY** on 01305 262258, even if you had already done so yesterday. Please do not just turn up on Monday as we have to prepare appropriate supervision for all children. Please can you specify which days would be needed, whether it is full days/half days, 1-2 days a week (which days if you are on a regular rota, etc).**

I thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

*P. Fearn*

Mrs Paula Fearn  
Head Teacher