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SEAHAM HARBOUR NURSERY SCHOOL
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15th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

School Update - 15th January 2021

I hope this letter finds you well and thank you once again for your continued support for our wonderful nursery school throughout this very difficult period of time. I continue to be available in school should anyone have any questions.

I communicated with you all on Monday 4th January, to share with you the decision reached by the full Governing Body to close the school to all but key workers and vulnerable children, for the period of two weeks. Thank you for respecting our decision and supporting the school by keeping your children at home to stay safe.

We are being sent a number of conflicting and different messages from the government, the Local Authority, unions, professional associations and media and I feel it is necessary to share our individual thoughts, as a local authority maintained nursery school, with you.

The most recent government advice is to 'behave like you have the virus' and stay at home as much as you can, which supports our decision to ask children to stay at home, where possible to reduce transmission from the mixing of households.

We have 106 children, across both buildings and are supported by 15 staff. This would mean 121 different households all mixing together.

We know many of our parents are in full time and part time employment, often relying upon grandparents to support with dropping off and collecting from nursery (in childcare bubbles). This, therefore, adds to the number of households mixing, often putting grandparents who fall within vulnerable groups into a dangerous position.

The local infection rate around our school area (Seaham Central and South) was 321 cases per 100,000 on Wednesday 6th January and has risen sharply to 450 cases per 100,000 on Wednesday 13th January. As you can see, the number of cases recorded has increased by 129 in a week. This is similar to other surrounding areas - Seaham Northlea, Westlea and surrounding areas have 505 cases per 100,000, Parkside, Deneside and surrounding areas have 450 cases per 100,000, Easington, Hawthorn and surrounding areas have 500 cases per 100,000 and Murton and South Hetton have 570 cases per 100,000 on the 13th January.

However, despite this the government are still stating nursery provision should be open to all children and it is safe for young children to attend, yet primary schools have to close. As a school for early years' children, we find ourselves in a difficult position.

Myself and the governing body continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of the entire school community and look on a daily basis at the local rate of cases; are in consultation with Public Health England and regularly review our risk assessment updating it as and where necessary. In view of all this, at the present time it is still felt we only remain open to keyworkers (who need emergency childcare) and vulnerable children. I will provide you with an update every two weeks.

We continue to communicate the message that if you require a place for your child, or you want to discuss their place we are here for you. Please contact us either by telephone or email. Every situation is unique, and we want to be able to support our families who have no other solution than to send their child to school.

We know our nursery school provides a vital and valuable service for you and your children. Throughout the last two weeks the nursery has been staffed and open, to a reduced number of children who fall within the key worker and vulnerable categories. We have continued to provide learning activities for all children who have been at home, through story times, the school website and our new unique creative bags. We are soon to launch Class Dojo, another platform for learning.

As Headteacher of our wonderful school, I feel personally responsible for supporting you all through this lockdown. We are all feeling the immense strain of following government guidelines, rules and advice; for a third time. Providing your children with the best education, in a caring and welcoming environment, that supports and develops each individual child in every aspect of their learning, still remains at the heart of what we want.

We must all work together, as a community to support one another and keep everyone safe to be able to offer this outstanding nursery education to all our children as soon as possible.

I urge you to take time to think. Our families are precious, and we all want to protect them from this dangerous virus. A virus that we cannot see and often do not even realise we are carrying. A virus that can lead to long term complications, hospitalisation and in the worst cases death. Please think carefully about your own circumstances, in an area where the infection rates are rising rapidly every day.

Stay safe, protect the ones you love and our whole community.

Kind regards

Carole Scott
Headteacher

