

Beverley School

A specialist school for children and young people with autism where staff and governors are fully committed to the safeguarding and wellbeing of our pupils



Saltersgill Avenue, Middlesbrough, TS4 3JS

Headteacher: Mrs Joanne Smith

Deputy Head: Mrs Jane May

Phone: 01642 811350

Email: office@beverleyschool.org.uk

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, can I thank those parents who have offered their messages of support at this incredibly difficult time.

Every decision made so far has been around trying to ensure that we play our part in preventing this catastrophic disease from spreading. Other countries have seen daily rises at massive levels and our NHS will not cope with the burden if we follow this pattern.

We take our responsibilities as educators extremely seriously. We have put all of our efforts this week into trying to provide work and links to work, that will maintain educational focus for students. We will continue to do so for the duration of this emergency.

The majority of our staff have children of their own, who they do not want to continue to send to school to increase the chance they will become ill or bring this disease into their homes. In spite of this, every single member of staff has expressed their distress at the dilemma that they face.

The advice around children having an EHCP plan was used for mainstream settings who usually have a handful of pupils. A school of our size, with the staffing that we have, means that on an ordinary day we have between 250-280 people in this small building. This is not social distancing and it is not keeping your child safe. Add to this the fact that many of our children do not understand or follow basic hygiene rules means that they and other children are at higher risk.

Currently we have a significant number of staff absent from school. They are themselves following advice to self isolate due to underlying health conditions.

The advice from government today with regard to key workers says that **'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'**.



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The word 'vulnerable' has been used as a reason to keep children in school. We consider that this means that they are not considered to be safe in their own homes with families for extended periods. I do not believe that we have families where children are unsafe with them. The majority of parents that I have spoken to would prefer their child to be safe with them and not in public setting with large numbers of people. Again, your child is at further risk if they have an underlying health condition such as asthma, a heart condition or diabetes. They are safest at home, with their families, who can control their hygiene and exposure to this virus.

The guidance is now clear that some children from special schools will be safer at school (because they are at risk in their homes) whilst others will be safer at home.

We will be contacting some families this afternoon to see if there is a need for some form of provision based on additional need ie key workers

The situation is changing on a daily basis. We all have a desire to return to normality and be open as soon as possible to all children. As soon as this is possible we will re-open. It is also possible that we could have some sort of rolling programme in the future but that comes with the same risks and many parents are already choosing to keep children at home to keep them safe.

'Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. Children should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.'

This remains an ever changing situation and we will continue to change with it. We will do everything we can to remain in contact with you and to have your children back with us as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

Joanne Smith



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*Middlesbrough Council's Specialist School and Service for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders
Visit our website - www.beverleyautism.ik.org*