

22nd May 2020

Dear parents/carers,

As you should be aware, Branfil will begin its phased reopening to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from 8th June 2020. Branfil also continues to be open to provide provision for the children of key workers, which after the half term break, will recommence on 2nd June 2020. The government has also provided updated guidance on the provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or children who have a social worker. Please find the guidance below:

Vulnerable children attendance is expected, where it is appropriate for them (that is, where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household, and/or following a risk assessment for children with an EHC plan), so that they can gain the educational and wellbeing benefits of attending. Vulnerable children – regardless of year group – that have not been attending in the recent period are expected to return to nursery, early years, school or college provision where this would now be appropriate for them to do so. We expect educational providers and other relevant partners to work with and support the relevant families and pupils to return to school or college, where attendance is appropriate. A brief summary of attendance expectations across the different groups of vulnerable children is as follows:

- *for vulnerable children who have a social worker, attendance is expected unless the child/household is shielding or clinically vulnerable (see the advice set out by Public Health England on households with possible coronavirus infection and shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable)*
- *for vulnerable children who have an education health and care (EHC) plan, attendance is expected where it is determined, following risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment*
- *for vulnerable children who are deemed otherwise vulnerable, at the school, college or local authority discretion, attendance is expected unless the child/household is shielding or clinically vulnerable (see the advice set out by Public Health England on households with possible coronavirus infection and shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable)*

Schools and colleges should continue to notify social workers where children with a social worker do not attend. They should also continue to follow up with any parent or carer whose child has been expected to attend and doesn't. To support the above, schools and colleges should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

Parents and carers will not be penalised if their child does not attend educational provision.

We would therefore politely request parents/carers to consider the guidance above, alongside their child's needs and possible risks to themselves and others with them being in the school environment. Please be aware that your child may not be supported by their usual member of support staff due to individual staff member's falling within the shielding and vulnerable categories. Please also refer to the letter sent by Mrs Sansom on Wednesday 20th May, which explains the measures that will be in place for all children. It is likely that some children with specific needs may find the changes and new way of working unsettling. Please also be aware that due to COVID-19, the law on Education, Health and Care Plans has been altered to reflect challenges local authorities and schools will have in sourcing and delivering provision. Local authorities and schools have been asked to make 'best endeavours' to provide provision for the children who have EHCPs

but there is the acknowledgement that provision is likely to be different than what is set out in the child's EHCP. This is not a 'switching off' of the legal requirements of EHCPs but an acknowledgement that provision may be different. Schools are having to follow strict guidelines which means that staffing, environments and resources are limited. I am glad to inform you that Branfil will continue with annual reviews scheduled for June and July.

More information on the changes to law in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans regarding the coronavirus can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus>

I will call each family on Monday 1st June to find out your decision about accessing school provision for your child. If you decide that you would like your child to access school provision, the school will update the Risk Assessment for your child to be on-site to assess whether he/she, other children and staff can be kept safe whilst providing for the needs of your child. If the risk assessment shows that your child would not be safe on site, or their needs could not be met effectively, school will continue to support your child learning at home. Likewise, if you decide your child is safest at home, school will continue to support families through personalised/ supplementary home learning, e-mails and telephone calls.

Many thanks

Miss Pearce
SENCo and Assistant Headteacher
Designated teacher for Looked After Children