



**Saint Edmund's and Saint Thomas'
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8th January 2021

CORONA VIRUS UPDATE 34 Critical Worker (Key Worker) Places

Dear Parents

All Headteachers received Department for Education guidance late yesterday afternoon which stated that schools could not place a limit on critical worker places. As you know, we attempted to avoid a situation whereby we would **increase the risks of social mixing**. Unsurprisingly, critical worker demand has increased and so have the numbers of **vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils**. At this stage, I should say that the vast majority of families on the waiting list could have some understanding with our situation in spite of an early refusal and consequential disruption. The initial allocation exercise was extremely difficult as we have always been focused on supporting all families wherever possible.

Guidance states that we now should not limit critical worker places and that if you have been entered on our waiting list you will now get a place from Monday providing that you bring evidence of a work of employment in one of the critical worker roles. **The Nursery will also be open to all Nursery children now regardless of critical worker status** The Department has stated that schools may ask for employment proof (pay slip work badge) beyond a standard letter to ensure that all claims for places are legitimate. This will be carried out retrospectively for all critical worker places of those who already have places.

*If it proves necessary, schools can ask for simple evidence that the parent in question is a critical worker such as their work ID badge or pay slip. **Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.** DFE 07/01/21*

Schools are worried and there are reports of some reaching high percentages of their roll in the return of critical worker children with high numbers of staff on site. This is recognised by the DFE and the response is :

*We know that every school will have a different number of children of critical workers who need to attend. It is important that on-site provision is provided for these pupils, and there is no limit to numbers of these pupils who may attend and schools should not limit attendance of these groups. **This is because we are reducing overall social contact across areas and the country rather than individually by each institution.** DFE 07/01/21*

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions from this statement as you consider what we have been told about staying home and minimising social contact

Finally, it is regrettable that the decision to close schools was made with no notice in spite of all the concerns which were being raised with the accelerated transmission of the covid variant. It is also regrettable that it has taken three days to clarify this particular issue and the consequential disruption for **all** of us. We will contact those who were on the waiting list today.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Kieran A Loftus Headteacher