

LINK ACADEMY TRUST

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January 7th 2021

Pupil Numbers attending school

Dear parents and carers,

I am writing to inform parents that in many of our academies we have a real concern about the number of pupils attending with a Key Worker place from today, increasing even further tomorrow, in respect of the potential related health risks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The government have closed schools with the intention of making them as safe as possible for staff, vulnerable pupils and those of keyworkers. This is not happening at many schools across the Link Academy Trust, as we have more than half of our pupils requiring a place in some academies making us highly exposed.

The number of children attending school this term is significantly higher than the numbers we had during the initial lockdown (in many cases 3 times more), and whilst we appreciate that many of you have made every effort to only book pupils in on the days required, we still need to allocate a space for all of those children, so that they are not mixing bubbles. This will impact on the quality of teaching we can deliver.

Since September we have worked hard to develop a comprehensive, broad and exciting 'quality-first' online teaching programme, however this is becoming increasingly difficult to deliver as teachers are trying to manage this alongside the large numbers of pupils in school. I would like to make it clear that the programme of online and paper-based provision is comprehensive and designed to ensure pupils progress through the National Curriculum and maintain the progress that has been achieved in the autumn term. It will take precedence and pupils in school will be using this where we have sufficient access to the internet to do so.

We also have some staff currently isolating due to health reasons and all staff will be required to be in school every day to manage the children attending school and all classrooms will be in use if we allow a space for all families who have requested a space. This also means that all staff will be in school, which again puts unnecessary pressure on the school.

This may well result in bubbles closing at short notice due to staff absence through illness or isolation, leaving those children of critical Covid-19 key workers or vulnerable children in a difficult position regarding childcare.

Whilst children of Key Workers are eligible for a place in school if just one parent has a job

that is listed, we urge you to consider keeping your child/ren at home if you can, unless your work is critical to the Covid-19 effort, particularly if you can work from home, or if one parent is not a key worker and is not working during school hours. By sending your child to school, when there is an alternative, is increasing the risk of transmission, particularly with the new strain of the virus being so contagious. Our hygiene practices are still stringent, but the more children and staff on site, the more likely the virus can spread. We urge you to support us by sending your child to school only when it is absolutely necessary for you to do your highly important role.

We appreciate that home schooling is difficult, particularly if you are juggling working from home. We know this is not an easy option, but we are trying to ensure that online learning is exciting, and children get to speak with their teachers and their peers to motivate them. We have developed some brilliant challenges that inspire them too. Teachers will always support you with individual needs if you contact them.

I urge you to have another look at your needs and please let us know if you are able to retract any of your Key Worker places. Also, going forward please only book spaces when it is essential, so that we can keep numbers in school to a minimum, which was the intention of school closures.

So, to ensure school remains a safe place for both staff and children, we need to ensure children who attend fit in the categories stated by the government and only attend when parents are at work. Please see the link below. We may require parents to provide evidence of their job role.

[Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/children-of-critical-workers-and-vulnerable-children-who-can-access-schools-or-educational-settings)

Thank you for your continued support and we are happy to support in any way we can during this challenging time.

Kind regards,

Nicky

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