

Headteacher: Mrs Lynn Torrance



Wroxall Primary School
Castle Road
Wroxall, Ventnor
Isle of Wight
PO38 3DP

Tel. 01983 852290

e-mail: office@wroxallprimary.co.uk

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I know the decision taken at national level to open of primary schools today has created a great deal of anxiety for some parents and carers. I do understand the decisions that some parents have taken with regard to their children returning to school. Rather than replying to all families individually, I have decided to write to all parents and carers to clarify to current position within school with regard to attendance / non-attendance from 4th January 2021. The guidance signposted below is the current government guidance which applies in all schools.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirusoutbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#attendance>

I have summarised below the main aspects of the guidance which all schools should follow.

Attendance expectations

The current government guidance explains that is vital for all children to attend school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance has therefore been mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term and remains so. This means that the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's attendance regularly at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Self-isolation and shielding

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because:

- they have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- they live with someone that has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Far fewer children therefore remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group following their routine discussions with their clinician.

The advice for pupils in local restriction tiers 1 to 3 who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should continue to attend school unless they are one of the very small number of pupils or students under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an education setting.

Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4 areas, and so all children still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school in all local restriction tiers.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, schools should be able immediately to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity but this does not need to be formally recorded in the attendance register.

For pupils who are self-isolating, or shielding and are within our definition of vulnerable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer pastoral support, and check they are able to access education support. Our published definition of vulnerable children includes young people who have a social worker or an education health and care (EHC) plan or those who are deemed otherwise vulnerable by the school or the local authority.

Where children are not able to attend school, as they are following clinical or public health advice related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about attending school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about attending school and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer formally advised, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, or those concerned about the possible increased risks from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with possible risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

I do appreciate the concerns of many people associated with COVID and the current position we are in as a Nation and as an Island community. However as a school leader I am required to follow the guidance and the guidance will apply at Wroxall Primary School. Home learning will not be sent home routinely for child not in school due to parental choice, as education is being delivered in school and is available for all children who can attend. In line with the school's Remote Learning policy and Remote Education plan, three days' worth of emergency remote learning for each class has been posted onto SeeSaw for children who are self-isolating. Additional resources will be uploaded as needed for any children who need to continue self-isolating after three days. The school will only move to its full plan for Remote learning if the school needs to fully or partially close.

I am more than happy to discuss the plans in place in more detail, please do feel free to contact me if this letter does not answer your individual query. I am fully committed to working with you, as always, to support children's needs while following the national guidance and remaining mindful of teacher wellbeing as they work to support teaching and learning within school in the safest way possible. I can assure you, as a school we are continually risk assessing,

updating plans and working with external providers to ensure we are doing all we can to keep everyone as safe as is reasonably possible.

Many thanks in advance for your understanding and support. If you have any further queries or would like to discuss this with me, please email: office@wroxallprimary.co.uk

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Torrance', written in a cursive style.

Lynn Torrance
Headteacher