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**Head of School: Diane Finney**

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**Head of School: Joan Wright**

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware schools across England have been instructed to once again close to the majority of children and young people as the latest wave of coronavirus increases pressure on the NHS. It is suggested that as many as 1 in 50 people may have the virus. This came into effect on Wednesday 6th January. Schools have once again been asked to remain open for the children of key workers and for vulnerable pupils. As all children within Special Schools could be defined as vulnerable we have been put in a challenging position once again. Some of the guidance would suggest all our pupils and students should be in school whilst other advice such as that from teaching unions suggests in the context of special schools, the definition of vulnerable is different. The reason schools have been closed is because of the risk of spreading the virus when there are so many children and adults within a building, this is no different in a special school. The Manor Hall Academy Trust of which the school is part has decided in the current circumstances and with the absence of any clear guidance we have to put the safety of children, young people and our staff first. We are working within the spirit of “Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives”. If a child is most safe at home they should stay at home. We have therefore reviewed and updated our risk assessments that we used last year to determine which children and young people should attend school and which would be safer at home.

Last year we were given the following guidance:

*“Special schools are advised to make case by case basis assessments of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For some, they will be safer in an education provision. For others, they will be safer at home.”*

In our view, the same applies in the current circumstances. It remains an unenviable decision to make as the variety of factors that make a child vulnerable are so wide and so individual. However, in line with other special schools we have made that decision based on those families that need our support the most.

**You will have received a text message or phone call informing you as to whether your son or daughter can attend school. The direction from the Government is that if it is possible for people to stay at home, then they should. For those that are eligible to send your child to school,the decision still lies with you as parents and carers. Whilst we will maintain the high levels of safety we always have, we cannot make any guarantees about the level of risk. Children will be travelling on transport with others, in classrooms with others, sharing facilities with others. It would be advisable for any child or young person with any health condition that puts them at possibly greater risk to not attend school. This includes children and young people with asthma.**

For those children and young people who do not attend school we will provide remote learning and support:

* Our Family Support team will be available during normal school hours via email to respond to any appropriate concerns.

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* If you feel you require a higher level of support during the school closure please get in touch with Sarah Rubanski.
* If you have any concerns regarding Safeguarding please email our Designated Safeguarding Lead – Sarah Rubanski [s.rubanski@springfield.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:s.rubanski@springfield.staffs.sch.uk)
* If you have any concerns regarding Health Issues not related to coronavirus please email [Specialschools.staffs@nhs.net](mailto:Specialschools.staffs@nhs.net)
* Teachers will deliver remote learning through the learning platform that child/young person has been familiar with during previous lockdowns and has used within school
* For some pupils we will be sending physical packs home with work for them to complete as we are aware that online learning is not appropriate for everyone
* Teachers will contact parents at least weekly to see how children and young people are finding the work and progressing
* We will endeavour to put any other important information and items onto our website so please keep checking.
* We will provide any further information regarding the opening of school via our website and txt message service.

We understand that many parents will feel that they do not want their child to miss face to face education and that it will be really difficult to engage them in any form of remote or home learning but we are, for the time being, putting the safety of your child first.

Finally, I hope that this lockdown is shorter than last time and it is the last time we have to shut our doors to children and young people. It is counter to everything we do at Springfield and The Meadows. We pride ourselves on being open to all families and providing more services than many other schools however for the coming weeks we must put the safety of our children, young people and staff first. Although we may not see every young person for some time we will be continuing to support you and your child through this difficult time.

Kind regards

Christopher Best

Executive Headteacher

Diane Finney

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