

Worcestershire County Council

Headteacher:
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Monday 4th January 2021

Dear parents,

A very happy New Year to you all! I do hope that you and your families have stayed safe and well and have had a lovely break together.

As advised before the holidays, and assuming nothing to the contrary is announced tonight by the Prime Minister, children return to school tomorrow (Tuesday 5th January). We are very much looking forward to having everyone back and beginning learning together again. Please note the expectation is that families will drop off at the **earliest time and pick up at the latest time**. Younger children will no longer wait on the playground, but be directed into school to strictly maintain distance. If you are bringing one child to school please drop off and pick up **at the correct time** – waiting in the car, if necessary. Once you have collected your children we would ask you to go home promptly. If you are waiting, please do this either in the car or on the school drive at a social distance. We need to avoid groups congregating at the end of the school drive please.

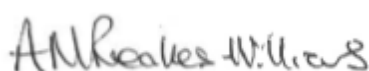
Our expectation and hope is that the Spring Term will run as smoothly as the Autumn Term. However, it is also true that a great deal has happened nationally, since then, and you may have a number of observations or concerns. In anticipation of this, we have compiled the following questions and answers, which we hope will enable you to feel confident and prepared for whatever is ahead of us all.

School is a partnership between parents, pupils and staff and this is even more important just now. Please talk to us if you have any further questions or observations, as we work together to keep our community safe and continue the important task of teaching children.

You can contact us on: head@astley.worcs.sch.uk oak@astley.worcs.sch.uk
elm@astley.worcs.sch.uk willow@astley.worcs.co.uk ash@astley.worcs.sch.uk

It is also possible that the weather may present us with challenges too! Parents may like to be aware of our [Adverse Weather policy](#) on the school website. Should we close for this reason, we will instigate home learning in line with our Remote Learning policy, whilst ensuring everyone has a chance to enjoy the snow!

Best wishes,



Alison Reakes-Williams
Headteacher

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe for my child to be in school now?

We are monitoring the local and national situation very carefully and as a school are very *COVID-conscious* to ensure all of our community is kept as safe as possible. During our INSET day on Monday 4th January, we will be revisiting our risk assessment and ensuring all the controls that we feel are needed are in place. You can view our [updated risk assessment](#) on the school website. We are also monitoring the local COVID levels which at the current time are below the national average.

We are both working parents and are finding it very stressful hearing that schools may close at some point. How much notice will we receive if Astley School has to close to the majority of its pupils?

We understand that the ever changing national picture combined with the press coverage is very stressful. We are finding it challenging too, so do bear with us as we work together on this. We will keep you as informed as we possibly can, in as timely a way as possible, whilst also ensuring that we don't bombard parents with emails and texts!

If school has to close to the majority of pupils what happens next?

If school closes, we will immediately switch to remote learning. The procedures are clearly described in our [policy](#) on the website. Teachers will set at least three tasks a day and these will closely mirror the work they would have done in school. The tasks need to be completed daily and submitted to class teachers online for review.

If you have requested a laptop, we will be in touch to let you know when it has been prepared for your child and when you can pick it up. All families should engage in home learning, as required by the recent government legislation.

If school has to close, will my child be eligible for a place in school?

The government has published a [list](#) of children eligible to attend. This includes children deemed to be vulnerable and children who have 'critical worker' parents. If all families where one parent is a 'critical worker' attended school, this could mean up to 70% of pupils attending. This would not be safe and we need to reduce this number to safely distance the children in each class, in line with advice. This may mean that only children who are vulnerable or who have *two 'critical worker' parents who cannot work from home* will be able to attend. We realise that this will be disappointing and difficult for many households. However, if the school has to close to the majority of pupils, it will be because it is no longer safe to accept large numbers of pupils into school.

How will I know if I have a place or not?

We will communicate with parents whose children are deemed to be vulnerable and let them know that should the school close, their children are expected to attend school full-time as normal. They will also be able to book Stay and Play in the usual way. We will do this by Friday 8th January once the list is finalised.

If parents believe that they fit the *two 'critical worker' parents who cannot work from home* criteria, they should email office@astley.worcs.sch.uk to advise us of this. Depending on pressure for places, we may then send you a form which your employers complete to verify this information. Please advise us of this by Friday 8th January so that we can begin to assess the need. Pupils who attend as 'critical worker' families will also be able to book Stay and Play in the usual way.

I am a single parent and a critical worker. Am I eligible?

We will need to assess this on a case by case basis. Parents who live apart and are both currently involved in childcare will need to demonstrate they are both *'critical worker' parents who cannot work from home*. Single parents who do not have a second parent currently involved in childcare, are eligible and should email the office to advise us of their 'critical worker' status by Friday 8th January. Depending on pressure for places, we may then send you a form, which your employers complete to verify this information.

I am a critical worker and my spouse/partner is not. If my child cannot attend school, it is going to be very difficult for us. What can I do?

We acknowledge that everyone's situation is different and realise that if the majority of children move to remote learning, it will create pressure on many families. Families may like to consider a [childcare](#)

[support bubble](#). This allows two households to share home schooling around their own work commitments. It might also help only children in a family to feel more connected. Employers may also be willing to consider more flexible working hours, as this situation will be replicated across every school and workplace.

Please do advise us of the difficulties that you face. You can speak to us in confidence at any time. We will then assess how we can help you. Whilst we may not be able to help you by offering a full time place in school, we may be able to offer something that would support you in your individual circumstances. This could include understanding that work cannot be completed in the school day but will be completed in the evening when parents are free from their own work, for example. If numbers allow, it could mean we can offer you a part-time place on set days of the week. This may not be in your child's usual class and may be in a mixed aged group. You would be able to book Stay and Play on the days your child attends.

What will learning in school be like for critical worker and vulnerable children?

The school day will be the same as it is now. They will attend at the times currently stated, wear school uniform, have an individually assigned seat in class at a safe social distance from other children. Reception children will have a slightly different experience, in line with Early Years best practice.

They will be supervised completing the remote learning tasks set by their teacher and upload the completed tasks to Teams, as the children working from home are doing. They are likely to be supervised by the class teaching assistant, as the teacher will be working from home.

We will advise you as to whether school dinners are available, when we know more from our provider. It is possible that all children will need to bring sandwiches. These will be eaten in class, with breaks as usual, taken separately from the other classes outside, supervised by their usual lunchtime supervisors, wherever possible.

Will my child receive testing for COVID in school?

At the current time secondary schools are making plans to test their children from 11th January. The government has advised us that they are planning to test pupils in primary schools, in due course. Once we receive further details as to when and how this will take place, we will write to you, as parents, with the details. Please be assured that no child will be tested without parental permission.

What should I do if my child has been in close contact with a positive case?

Your child must self-isolate for 10 days at home. They should not attend to collect other children from school. They should self-isolate for the full 10 days, even if they receive a negative test result within this time frame. Other members of the household do not need to self-isolate.

What should I do if someone in my household has COVID symptoms?

The whole household must self-isolate and the person with symptoms must book a test. They should, as far as possible, be kept separate from the rest of the household. If the test is negative they may return to school, if well, and stop self-isolating.

I have heard that bubbles can burst. What does this mean?

All of our classes are an individual bubble. This means that the staff and children do not mix, wherever possible, with the other bubbles (classes). Should we have a positive case in one of the classes, we would need to send the staff and children, who are deemed to be close contacts, home for ten days. This group would move to remote learning and receive three or more learning tasks a day in line with our [Remote Learning Policy](#). If we have to close a class, we will keep everyone fully informed by email.

Is there any other reason that could close a class or the school?

As a staff team, we are mindful of the need to act responsibly and will continually review our practices to keep everyone as safe as possible. However, it is possible that despite taking great care, we will experience staff absences that mean it is difficult to safely staff the school. We will do everything we can to ensure that school remains open and fully functioning. However, if staffing levels drop to an unsafe level, the governors may need to take the decision to close individual classes or the school.