



Ballytober will be open from Monday 23rd to children of key workers or those regarded as vulnerable. Mrs Arlene Foster announced yesterday that the offer of care should be extended to include children who have only one parent employed as a key worker, not both parents as previously stated.

The most recent correspondence from the Department of Education once again outlined the broad categories of which parents or guardians would be defined as a key worker. These definitions are dependent on the circumstances and requirements which develop over the course of this critical period.

#### **Health and Social Care**

This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector.

#### **Education and childcare**

This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response.

#### **Public safety and national security**

This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), fire and rescue service, prison service and other national security roles.

#### **Transport**

This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response.

#### **Utilities and Communication**

This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies, to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, services and waste disposal.

#### **Food and other necessary goods**

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (eg hygiene, medical etc).

#### **Other workers essential to delivering key public services**

#### **Key national and local government**

These include those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

The term "vulnerable" refers to pupils :-

- Receiving support from Health and Social Services, including family support, child protection and looked after children services
- On the Child Protection Register
- With statements of special educational needs
- Accessing EOTAS
- Accessing Education Nurture Units
- With emerging and diagnosed mental health needs
- Who are homeless
- Who are young carers
- Subject to paramilitary threat
- Whose parents have mental health problems
- Whose parents have alcohol and drug addictions
- Affected by domestic violence

Although you may be a key worker or your child may be vulnerable, I need to stress that the school's provision must only be accessed if you have absolutely EXHAUSTED EVERY OTHER POSSIBILITY. It is only to be used when you have NO OTHER OPTIONS.

Parents are advised by both the Executive and the Department of Education to keep their children at home. The fewer children in school the better, and the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals. Parents also need to ensure that their children are not mixing socially in a way which will continue to spread the virus.

Please consider the duty of care I also have towards all members of Ballytober's staff, something I don't take lightly in the current circumstances. Without exception, they have agreed to provide supervision for the foreseeable future, but they are naturally anxious about placing themselves at further risk of infection. We all have vulnerable loved ones, either within our immediate family circle or within our extended families. Naturally, we want to support parents who genuinely have no other option but we do so with understandable trepidation and concern.

Equally, be fully aware that the provision on offer is very different from what your child usually experiences at school. Although the children will be fully supervised, all members of staff will have to follow strict social distancing guidelines. These protect your child as well as the teachers, classroom assistants and building supervisor.

Contact me by text on 07892 834428 regarding your child's provision if you genuinely have no other option for the foreseeable future. It would be appreciated if all expressions of need were received as soon as possible to allow me adequate time to organise the school-based provision before the start of the week. Upon request, a care application form will be sent to you by email, for completion before your child attends their first day.

In the meantime, please take care. We want to see all members of the Ballytober community come through this situation as safely and healthily as possible. You are all genuinely in my thoughts and prayers.

*E. Anderson*  
Principal