



BENSHAM MANOR School

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Dear families,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well.

I am writing to you because there have been a number of developments since I contacted you last week. I explained that the Government had made the decision to keep Special Schools open. However, I know that for many this decision was confusing, especially for SEN schools in Croydon, when all other schools were to remain shut.

Over the weekend two unions, the NEU and Unison, advised their members that they should not return to school from the 4th of January and teach full classes given the current spread of the Covid virus. Cases are rising daily and the new strain of the virus is reported as being 75% more infectious.

I have received a signed letter today from 17 members of staff saying that they will not attend school to teach full classes as per their union guidance. Coupled with the 5 members of staff who are ill, 6 members of staff who are self-isolating, 1 member of staff who is shielding and 3 members of staff who have no childcare due to Croydon school closures, this means that I am unable to open Bensham Manor safely at this time. I understand that for many of you this will be disruptive and I apologise. I have discussed the situation with my Chair of Governors and with Shelley Davis, Croydon's Director of Education.

This will be reviewed on a weekly basis, therefore, I will write to you again on Friday with an update.

This means that remote learning will begin from Weds January 6th. This will be a combination of set work and online classes delivered by teachers. *Please note that I am unable to ask staff who are ill to provide work/teach classes.*

I will be able to offer onsite provision to the children of key workers and children whom the safeguarding team believe need to be at school at this current time. This will begin on Weds January the 6th. **If you would like to apply for a key worker place then please contact theoffice@benshammanor.com by the end of today.** You may need to provide proof of your key worker status. If you are given a place and your child receives school transport then you must let transport know. You will need to provide a packed lunch/pay for a school meal if you are not entitled to free school meals.

The situation around Covid is ever changing and the guidance is constantly being updated. As soon as I am made aware of any developments I will, as always, keep you updated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support during this very challenging time in education.

I will be writing to you again tomorrow about testing and the planned roll out for Bensham Manor staff and students.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Robinson