



Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to jointly set out the position concerning school openings within the current Covid national lockdown.

We aim to work together to ensure that the right offer is in place for you in these challenging circumstances.

Government statement on access to schools

The government's message is that the vast majority of children should remain at home where possible and take part in the remote learning offer provided by their school. Whilst schools continue to be safe; the intention is to reduce the increase in positive Covid cases in your communities, easing the pressure on the NHS and hospital places.

Schools will remain open, and places may be made available to:

- Children of parents identified as critical workers
- Vulnerable children

I'm facing difficulties – what support is available?

We know that the current situation has created a level of uncertainty and anxiety for all. We want to reassure you that there is support available. Please see some of the support available on our Local Offer website.

For anyone having to self-isolate, help and support with food and medical supplies can be found by calling the Stockport Coronavirus Helpline on 0161 217 6046 from Monday to Thursday from 9am to 5pm and Friday from 9am to 4:30pm.

How is Stockport implementing the Government statement?

We want to be clear on the current position about Stockport schools and nurseries.

Early years settings, including nurseries will remain open for all children.

During the national lockdown, primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers only. All other pupils should receive remote education.

We have all had to adapt swiftly to new ways of accessing information and support during the pandemic. If computer equipment is an issue then please speak to your school. You can obtain further support from the council's IT lending library by ringing 07537 127 095.

We have also been made aware that, in addition to computers and tablet devices, many smart TVs and even recent games consoles can be used to access

the internet and remote learning resources. Please see <https://www.tes.com/news/how-use-xbox-or-playstation-online-learning> for more information.

Who is classed as a “vulnerable child/young person”?

The definition of vulnerable children and young people includes children who have a social worker, an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or who may be vulnerable for another reason at local discretion (“otherwise vulnerable”).

Schools continue to be open for face to face learning for some children and young people during this period. These include:

Those with an EHCP- these young people will be offered a school place. It is up to parent/carers whether your child takes up this place. Your school will speak to parents about whether you want to take up this place and plans for support.

We realise that the current situation may pose an additional challenge for our SEND learners across Stockport. We need to ensure that support is offered in line with their EHCP plans. For those children with EHCP who are not attending, we will be contacting families to ensure support is in place in the next few weeks once we have gauged who is not in.

We know that lockdown challenges everyone, but for our SEND families, this is particularly the case. We have the SEND hub which can be contacted on 0161 217 6028 option 2, here you gain further advice and support.

Those with a social worker- these young people will be offered a school place. We will be working together with families to support attendance.

Vulnerable children: Other groups, including those classed as vulnerable, might access a place. These include:

- o Children who are receiving early help support or in the process of being referred to children’s service’s for support
- o Children who are adopted or on a special guardianship order
- o Children living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness
- o Children who are young carers
- o Those who may be at risk of not being in education, employment or training
- o Children who may have difficulty in engaging with remote learning due to circumstance eg lack of IT, quiet space to study
- o Children who are care leavers
- o Others at the provider and local authority’s discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

The discussion will need to take place with your school if you feel you may need a place as your child/family fall into this definition.

Any child with Covid symptoms, or who needs to self-isolate, must do so at home regardless of their need for a school place.

Children of critical workers. The list of critical workers can be found on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website. A school place should be offered to any family where at least one parent/carer is a critical worker, but if, as a family with a critical worker, you can keep your child at home and support their learning you should do so. Please do not ask for a school place unless necessary. If you can support your child to learn from home on some but not all days each week, please discuss this with your school.

If you need a face-to-face school place, you should contact your school to discuss your child's school place and confirm arrangements. You can also talk to your social worker (if you have one), or any professional working with you or your family. However, if you have further queries or have not been able to access a place but urgently need one to fulfil a critical role then you can email school.enquiries@stockport.gov.uk

Is full-time access guaranteed?

Stockport schools are committed to providing places for those children outlined in this letter. We must acknowledge that the offer available to you will vary depending upon what your child's school can safely provide; this will change over time for every school.

Where a school experiences staff sickness, staff members who need to shield or self-isolate, its ability to safely provide face to face learning for all children who qualify for a school place will be affected. It may be that a school has to reduce the number of places available, or reduce the hours that your child can be in school. We continue to work closely with our colleagues in Public Health to ensure that we provide a safe environment and comply with current government guidance.

We ask that Parent/carers understand that where there are issues with places, these decisions have not been taken lightly and will be reviewed as situations change.

We ask that the current public health advice is followed by us all to protect you and your loved ones. To further support our efforts to reduce the virus's community transmission, you must wear a face covering (unless exempt) and keep a two-metre distance from anyone outside your household at all times when on school premises (where possible).

Updates and useful Contacts

In most cases, you should direct any queries to your child's school. However, you may find updated information on:

- Individual school websites
- PACTS website www.pactstockport.co.uk
- LA Facebook and Twitter pages
- For admission and school place queries: school.enquiries@stockport.gov.uk

- Current Public Health advice – www.stockport.gov.uk/coronavirus

We understand that supporting home learning is challenging, especially if you are also working from home. We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and understanding at this time.

Yours sincerely

Steve Nyakatawa
Director of Education

Paul Harper/Sherann Hillman- Chairs of Parents and Carers Together (PACT)