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Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

When we started back at school on Monday morning I don't think any of us imagined the position we would all be in by 8pm on Monday night.

The announcements made by the government have plunged us all - each and every one of us - into a whirlwind of emotions, a state of confusion and, in many cases, panic as we worked to understand the ramifications and impact of the information shared.

As this has impacted on us all, I must say a huge thank you for being patient and giving us time to do the aforementioned whilst being empathetic to the impact of the announcements on all others and for the messages of support via school for the children and school community. These have been very uplifting for all staff. We all advocate for our own loved ones, and rightly so, but in times like this we also need to consider the broader picture.

I must also say thank you to those families who responded to the communication sent out on the 4<sup>th</sup> January related to places at school.

As schools across the country battled to get communications out to their parents our main system of Teachers2Parents crashed. Instead, we utilised the school website ([www.archibaldfirstschool.org](http://www.archibaldfirstschool.org)), Twitter (@archibaldfirst), Seesaw, Tapestry as well as year group WhatsApp/Facebook pages prior to being able to share the letters on Teachers2Parents. If we find ourselves in this position again, please endeavour to check all these means of communication as we will be keeping you informed.

- To those families who were able to state from the start that they could and/or wished to keep their children at home – thank you for letting us know and for making this decision based on what is right for you and your family. This was a massive help in enabling us to look at the provision we could offer.
- To those families who provided the information requested – thank you. It has also been very interesting to see the wealth of knowledge and expertise we have across our school community.

As I write this school is closed to most pupils, not due to the fact that school is unsafe per say, but so that we can each play our part in reducing the spread of this virus by limiting the number of social interactions we each have. In the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now all have a social and moral responsibility as well as a need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible.

**Having fun, achieving excellence.**

Successful learners. Confident individuals. Responsible citizens.

Whilst it is acknowledged that children do not (on the whole) suffer acutely from the virus; you, your family, the staff and their families must also be considered in this dreadful predicament that we find ourselves in.

To date we have facilitated places in school for children who are deemed vulnerable in accordance with the DfE guidance and worked to facilitate spaces for children of critical key workers.

In a school community such as ours the vast majority of parents are working professionals; this makes making the decisions incredibly difficult. We made these decisions as a Senior Leadership Team whilst working within the remit of our risk assessment for our children, community and staff; the advice and updates from the Local Authority and from the Government, and following consultations with unions; all of this continues to be ongoing.

An additional consideration is that guidance is constantly updated, and often not published in a timely manner. As a school, we will take the time needed to digest updates and understand what the right next steps are for us and our community.

Since the first national lockdown in March 2020, school has worked to keep you informed at all stages. As we move into this new phase, we will of course continue to provide you with this communication.

Our focus is on the children, their learning and their wellbeing.

Today you will have received our Remote Learning Offer information and we hope that the experience of the last few days has been as positive as possible to date. Please make contact with the class teachers with any queries you have related to the offer or the learning provided. If there is a wider concern with the remote learning offer, please make contact with me via [admin@archibald.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:admin@archibald.newcastle.sch.uk) or ring the school on 0191 2851957.

We are now on day 3 of the national lockdown; let's keep taking one day at a time and moving forwards together.

Best wishes

Rebecca Turner